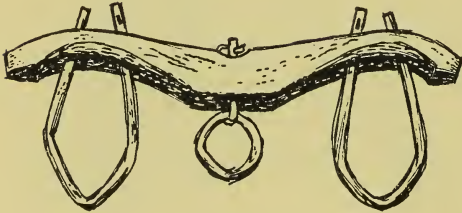




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**SUT**  
**LOVINGOOD**

**Grove Press, New York**



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DESIGNED BY BETTY KORMUSIS  
MANUFACTURED IN THE U.S.A.  
BY H. WOLFF, NEW YORK



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Lincoln  
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"I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll just dedicate this here  
production *to the durndest fool* in the United States  
—and Massachusetts too—he or she. . . .

DEDICATED

WITH THE SYMPATHIES OF THE AUTHOR  
TO THE MAN OR WOMAN, WHOEVER THEY BE,  
WHAT DON'T READ THIS HERE BOOK."

Lincoln

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## INTRODUCTION

Commenting on George Washington Harris in his anthology of Southwestern frontier humor, Franklin J. Meine wrote: "For vivid imagination, comic plot, Rabelaisian touch, and sheer *fun*, the *Sut Lovingood Yarns* surpass anything else in American humor." The judgment is not mere hyperbole, for the combination of virtues found in Harris's writing is genuinely unique. Nonetheless, this is the first full-length collection of his work to appear in almost a century.

The reasons for neglecting the monologues of Sut, the Southern mountain youth, might virtually be descriptions of their valuable qualities. Permeating the stories throughout is an unadulterated determination

to evoke laughter and to reveal the delight of animality. This is achieved by picturing the doings of Great Smoky Mountain folk with racy details and generous sympathy, in a language more faithful to the vernacular and its poetry than most American literature written since has contained. Furthermore, Harris loved to tell a good story and did so with an extraordinary narrative zest.

The dominant literary interests of the pre-Civil War period in which Harris wrote were the New Englanders. These men looked askance at stories whose main stress was on humor, in which the common man figured as a central character, whose style was speech as he spoke it, which mercilessly ridiculed sentimentality and gentility, in which there were no taboos on the robust expression of the funny and the pleasurable. Such stories were surely the epitome of Jacksonian democracy, composed by someone flaunting his coarseness, ignoring the canons of good taste, abysmally unaware of respectable culture, and probably uneducated too. If Harris was disregarded on these counts by the guardians of the cultural temple, it was not because they even bothered to read him. Work like his was simply outside their province, of no interest to their publishers and magazines, and undoubtedly not even submitted to them. As for the South, where Harris lived, its genius was resolutely permitted to go elsewhere or subsist in obscurity unless caught up in propagandizing for slavocracy.

Yet it was Southern politics which ultimately nurtured the ribald humor of Harris, even though politi-

cal disquisition on a higher level represented the South's conception of virtuous literary art. Aloof though a gentleman might be, he still had to depend on the vote of the common man. And since party newspapers were anxious to appeal to the latter, they provided space for a literature centered on folk experience. More than expediency was involved, of course; gentlemen, despite disclaimers, usually stemmed from the lower classes and shared a mutual interest in the South's indigenous humor with them, as well as in the sport and conviviality which played a large role in it.

Until a quarter of a century ago, however, Harris remained almost completely forgotten. The post-Civil War period witnessed an intensification of the values proscribing Harris and his fellow frontier humorists in the North. When Mark Twain, the greatest of these men, finally came East, he was greeted with a disturbed queasiness which never quite vanished. In the South, meanwhile, writers and men of affairs argued over whether to accept the harsh socio-economic lessons of Northern victory or to romanticize the departed days of plantation society. While this crucial debate proceeded, some writers turned to an exploitation of the quaint and exotic local color of their region. Mary Noailles Murfree ("Charles Egbert Craddock") created fiction based on the mountain region previously treated by Harris. Generally speaking, there was nothing in Miss Murfree's polite work to prevent its publication in the genteel magazines. Except for its dialect, there was little to invite

comparison with the realistic and earthy Sut Lovin-  
good yarns. A few perceptive scholars paid some inci-  
dental attention to Harris and the frontier humorists.  
However, not until the publication of Meine's *Tall  
Tales of the Southwest* (1930), Constance Rourke's  
*American Humor* (1930), and Bernard DeVoto's  
*Mark Twain's America* (1932) were Harris and  
frontier humor re-incorporated into the main stream  
of American literature.

## II

Mark Twain could not possibly have been overlooked  
by the Bostonians. He was the spokesman for a por-  
tion of the nation larger in size than New England,  
more vital in spirit. Men and women had flowed from  
one shore of the vast continent to the Pacific at its  
other shore. All that had transpired in those years of  
journey and settlement was blended into his writings.  
Much of it bore the direct stamp of Harris; Twain  
had reviewed *Sut Lovin'good* in a San Francisco news-  
paper and the book's influence is traceable in his own  
work. Beyond that, the fantasy of Harris, his gro-  
tesque humor and satirical imagination, his sensitive  
reproduction of ordinary language are also charac-  
teristics of Twain. With all their similarities, how-  
ever, Harris was fated to be overshadowed. Twain  
was prolific for a greater number of years; he went  
beyond the short newspaper piece of Harris into the  
complex form of the novel; he was a man of the world  
rather than a provincial like Harris; and, at the last,



the equalitarian strain in Harris was enriched with humanity in Twain.

The smaller compass of Harris, however, fostered a lyric intensity which reflects itself in his prodigious outpouring of poetic similes and metaphors. Characters and situations may at times be repetitive in outline, but they are vivified and transcended by imagery which practically never repeats itself. Details flash by at breathless speed; their insight into motive, their re-creation of the sensuous texture of life plunge the reader deep into the heart of Sut's strange world. Working intensively within a limited scope, Harris veritably embraced almost every aspect of his chosen reality and, as will be discussed later, seems to have gone beyond it too. There is not elsewhere in American literature, certainly not in the Nineteenth Century and not even in Twain's masterpiece, *Huckleberry Finn*, a similar portrait of primitive, insular man in all his bestiality, glory, and humor. Nor, for that matter, has anyone equalled the concentrated richness of his style.

A writer's appropriateness for subsequent ages may be measured by the extent to which his fundamental elements have reappeared discernibly. By this test, Harris surely belongs to us. The influence of Twain is undoubtedly responsible in part. In greater part, however, those major artists who resemble Harris—Thomas Wolfe, Erskine Caldwell, and William Faulkner, Southerners all—do so because the American frontier tradition is ineradicable. The continuity may be seen at once in the basically-identical

plot structure of Harris's uncollected "Well! Dad's Dead" and Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*. It is more subtly comprehended in Wolfe's largeness, Faulkner's violence, and Caldwell's antic peasantry, though this curt catalog by no means exhausts the similarities. To a limited extent, all three modern writers have composed humor in various forms—grotesque and ironic in Faulkner, grandiose in Wolfe, nostalgic and eccentric in Caldwell—and they have all written in the common tongue. But their humor is pallid, generally without the joyousness of Harris. Their language, which may be brilliant as in Faulkner's "Spotted Horses," is frequently marred by banal and pompous rhetoric in both Wolfe and Faulkner, has been stripped of poetry in Caldwell. There is no intention of suggesting that these men be replaced by Harris, merely a reminder that his refreshing mirth offers relief from their grimness and so merits our gaze.

### III

The life of George Washington Harris was unsettled, made turbulent by political and sectional controversy terminating in civil war, punctuated by the defeat of his ideals and the inability to acquire worldly success. Nonetheless, this experience, coupled with his temperament, was to provide him with the foundation responsible for his distinctive humor.

The son of a native Virginian, he was born in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, on March 20, 1814. About

1820, however, the family migrated to Knoxville, virtually a frontier village in Scotch-Irish East Tennessee with less than a thousand inhabitants. The frontier impinged on young Harris in the pioneers who passed through Knoxville for more distant lands. Perhaps even more important in shaping Harris was the frontier tradition embodied in a man like Davy Crockett of Tennessee, soon to become the epitome of the frontiersman in oral and written literature.

Apprenticed during his youth to metalworker and jeweler, Harris at twenty-one became the captain of one of the first steamboats plying the Tennessee River in the trade between Knoxville and the lower South. For a brief period, too, he aided the government in transporting the Cherokee Indians being removed from their lands to settlements further west. The most significant of these formative years in their effect on his writing, however, were the three or four he spent as a farmer in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains. There Harris's interest in "seeing humanity in all its varieties" fed itself on the language and character of the country folk whom he later sketched in his stories. The quiltings, dances, weddings, and religious meetings which made up their social life proved vastly entertaining and left a residue of situations for subsequent development. Nor, apparently, did he miss the more profound concerns which underlay their rude existence.

The personality that emerged during Harris's young manhood also contributes some illumination of his restless career and the humor he created. "A little

fellow" with a "quick, nervous way," he was physically courageous and exceptionally proud, asserting his decisions without fear of authority or consequence. Balancing his aggressiveness, however, was much personal charm, as well as a proclivity for good fellowship, joking, and yarn spinning. These attributes won him friends; even those who later supported him in ventures proving unprofitable merely deplored his business ineptitude but remained constant to him.

Apparently Harris's combination of vigor and gregariousness was recognized as a valuable asset, for almost at the inception of his farming career he began his lifelong association with the rough-and-tumble politics of Tennessee. Political activity provided Harris with an initial opportunity for literary expression; it guided him in the assumption of a critical temper. The party journalism of the period barred neither invective nor caustic frankness when dealing with an opponent. In the polemical pieces which Harris began contributing to the *Knoxville Argus and Commercial World* in 1839, for example, a major theme was the hypocrisy of those men who had betrayed their party allegiance for cash or office. Perhaps because of this uncompromising tone, his political career, engrossed and devoted though he might be, did not bring him the rewards which more tactful men obtain. It could not be said that he lacked the necessary acumen: in one of his political satires during the 1850's, Harris sagaciously predicted the results of the 1856 presidential campaign and the dissolution of the Know-Nothing party. Nor, indeed, was Harris averse to the

## INTRODUCTION

rigors of campaigning, finding enjoyment in stumping, baby-kissing, and handshaking at corn huskings and other gatherings. The only appointive office he ever held, however, was that of Postmaster in Knoxville; his stay in that post was limited to seven months.

The party with which Harris had aligned himself was the Democratic Party of Tennessean Andrew Jackson, the party which had traditionally espoused the interests of both artisans and farmers. It was a choice consistent with his own background, one which he affirmed in other ways as when joining with a group of Knoxville artisans in the 1840's to protest the competition of goods produced by prison labor. Unfortunately, East Tennessee was changing from a region of independent artisans and small farmers slowly but perceptibly. Men were arising in it who welcomed industrialism, wished to exploit the mineral resources of the area, and strove to develop large-scale trade and commerce. Furthermore, the businessman's Whig Party was dominant in East Tennessee. Harris's prosperous half-brother Samuel Bell, for example, was active in Whig politics and served as Mayor of Knoxville for two terms in the 1840's. Harris remained loyal to the Democratic Party, however, as it continued to lose power locally and nationally, writing in its official organ in 1839 and accepting election to the Democratic State Central Committee in 1856. To complicate his politics still more, Harris early advocated secessionism though East Tennessee was strongly Unionist and anti-slavery. In addition to Harris's love for the Southern

way of life, this choice may have stemmed from the artisan's fear of free Negro competition, from party regularity or a belief in States' rights. Whatever its origins, it partially explains Sut's contemptuous references to Negroes, abolitionists, Yankee peddlers, and Abraham Lincoln. Of course, some of these butts were antipathies of the common man quite apart from secessionist sentiments, as were "foreigners" like Jews and Catholics, and exist as such even in the works of Northern humorists like "Sam Slick" and Artemus Ward.

Though Harris opposed the Whigs and supported the Jacksonian Democrats, he nevertheless tried for many years to establish himself as both businessman and manufacturer. The record is one of failure on the whole, first as an independent craftsman operating a metalworking shop, then as glass manufacturer and sawmill manager. These sorties as an entrepreneur were interspersed with periods of employment as metalworker, steamboat captain for a second time, and surveyor of copper mines. The final years of his life were spent as a railroadman in various jobs, the last one involving planning and construction of railroads being laid out in the New South after the Civil War. There is paradox in Harris's participation in the industrialization and expansion which he otherwise resisted because it threatened to eliminate the leisurely and convivial spirit of the South. There is perversity in his unwillingness to embrace a political party whose connections would have enabled him to succeed in business. Finally, there is tragic irony in

this spectacle of a man who, though temperamentally unsuited and intellectually antagonistic, was pushed by the tide of his times to engage in undertakings where personal victory was unlikely. The disappointments of such a man go far toward explaining the fierce delight evinced in his limning of the gusto, the irresponsibility, and the grotesquerie of a wild creature like Sut Lovingood.

## IV

During his lifetime, Harris received a recognition for his humorous and satirical writings which did much to compensate for his worldly ill-luck. Newspapers eagerly presented his stories to their readers. His pieces are to be found in important anthologies of antebellum American humor such as W. T. Porter's *A Quarter Race in Kentucky* (1846) and T. C. Haliburton's *The Americans at Home* (1854). By the latter year, in fact, Harris was one of the most valued contributors to Porter's New York *Spirit of the Times*, a weekly sporting paper famous for its publication of humor. Harris's first fictional sketch had appeared in the *Spirit* in 1845; it contained many of the racy details, lusty characters, and stylistic touches which distinguish the Sut Lovingood tales. Nine years later, in 1854, the fantastic Sut himself frolicked into being in the *Spirit*, relating the adventures of "Sut Lovingood's Daddy, Acting Horse."

The weight of Harris's imagination and thought was thereafter carried by Sut. But it was not only in

the evocation of pure laughter that Sut became a willing instrument. The Democratic newspapers of the South, which published most of the Sut stories after the first one had appeared in the *Spirit*, were caught up in the increasing fury of partisan strife. The popularity of Sut induced Harris to utilize him in satirical pieces of the kind which was then common in American humor and found a country bumpkin commenting wisely and acidly on issues and personalities. Sometimes, too, the bumpkin meandered on to Washington or his state capital in order to take a personal hand in affairs and straighten out an intolerable mess.

The Lincoln trilogy in this book, which appeared in the Nashville *Union and American* of February 28, March 2, and March 5, 1861, has been selected to represent Harris as a satirist. Lincoln, the frontier humorist who as President found relaxation in the satirical pieces of Orpheus C. Kerr, Petroleum V. Nasby, and Artemus Ward, might not have enjoyed Harris's satires of him as much as a secessionist would. But he would have understood their context; as a politician Lincoln had made effective use of the homely image, mimicry, the tall story, and pitiless caricature to devastate his opponents. He would have laughed at the exaggeration of ugliness so customary in frontier humor, at the charge of excessive drinking from a toper like Sut, and at the distortion of his wise caution into stupidity. He probably would have viewed Harris's satire as rather mild when set beside the mass of sober abuse which followed upon his surreptitious entrance into Washington.



## INTRODUCTION

When Harris's *Sut Lovingood*, his only book, was published by a New York firm in 1867, obvious satires like the Lincoln pieces were not included. Stressing humor alone, the book was subtitled "Yarns Spun by a Nat'ral Born Durn'd Fool" and bore the following epigraph: "A little nonsense, now and then, / Is relished by the wisest men." The stories, from which those in this book were selected, amply fulfilled Harris's prefatory intention of giving the reader "such a laugh as is remembered with his careless boyhood." Two years later, while returning to Alabama from a business trip into Virginia, Harris fell ill on the train. He was at first apparently mistaken for a drunk, and ignored. At Knoxville, however, he was carried off the train and given medical treatment in the city. Shortly before he died on December 11, 1869, perhaps in truth and perhaps as a final joke, Harris whispered the word "poisoned." No post-mortem was made, and the cause of his death remains unknown.

## V

An understanding of why the *Sut Lovingood* stories possess the character they do is facilitated by a brief glance at the frontier tradition to which Harris was subjected. The phrase "a new country" is one key to the frontier, and it occurs in Harris's writing as well as in those of other frontier humorists. It found a place in Harris because the spirit of the frontier kept washing back upon relatively-settled lands like East Tennessee and kept their frontier heritage alive. Most

significantly for Harris, it returned in the form of written versions of oral anecdotes. These rough transcriptions gradually became more artful and, like his own work, took on the lineaments of a mature literature. In the *Spirit of the Times*, for example, or in the books of men like Johnson J. Hooper, Augustus B. Longstreet, and Madison Tensas, Harris read the earlier humor of the frontier and absorbed much of its technique and content.

The frontiersman had made light of the new country's hardships by enveloping his misfortunes in a mocking humor. A stubborn pride had encouraged him to glory in adversity, to perversely seize upon difficulty as the cause of heroic action, to grossly and sardonically exaggerate qualities which enabled a man to triumph over circumstances: coarseness, endurance, decision, brutality, shrewdness, trickiness, speed, strength. Weakness, sentimentality, stupidity, regret, thoughtfulness, and respectability were handicaps for survival in a new country, therefore characteristics of the ludicrously inept and worthy only of contempt and ridicule. Yet behind the bravado of the frontier lay a profound fear of the supernatural and the mysterious.

Frontier life influenced the form of its humor as well as its nature. The storyteller could be certain of his audience's attention if he concerned himself with the realities of daily life. Since delayed reactions lessened his entertainment value, he specialized in physical action rather than psychological subtleties, generally developing character by means of objective

behavior and descriptive details rather than analysis. The pace of the tale was kept rapid so as to accord with the tempo of existence, though digressions might occur for purposes of emphasis and ironic effect. It was related in the common tongue, where figures of speech which compressed, heightened, and toyed with experience were frequent since life was exuberant and varied. Finally, to underscore the proximity of the homely and the heroic, the extravagant was cloaked in understatement testifying to the narrator's lack of surprise at what he assumed his audience knew was only natural and to be expected.

The events and interests of Harris's life also left their impress on the Lovingood yarns. Primarily, Harris aimed to present imaginary characters in invented situations with all the humor and genius at his command. On the other hand, Sut obviously functions as a device to carry forward a satirical discussion of political and economic affairs, as well as Harris's thoughts about such matters as religion, temperance, women, and sentimentality. These wide-ranging intentions of Harris's overlapped, inevitably so because he was unable to devote himself exclusively to either fiction or journalism. The result was a mixing of themes and emphases which at first sight appears to negate some of the humor, but actually roots it so firmly that the comic prevails at every level.

The integrated artistry of Sut can be illustrated in his scathing treatment of the circuit-riding preachers whom Sut despises with ceaseless virulence. A member of the Presbyterian church, Harris found it

desirable in his satire proper to use "Methodistic" as a term of opprobrium. As it happened, the Methodists (and Baptists, too) dispatched the greatest number of circuit riders into the country and the mountains. These men were not always distinguished for their intelligence, education, or personal behavior. Harris may thus have had sober grounds for his displeasure with them. When Sut undertakes to tangle with them, however, the sobriety of Harris is imbedded in shrewd and homely details which are appropriate for a rebellious character like Sut. The prayerful, supplicating gesture introducing Clapshaw in "Blown Up with Soda" is the man ignobly concealing his fright in a ritual motion, but the hypocrisy implicit in the act and under attack has been made laughable because of the ridiculous incongruity of Sut's condensed description.

There are indications that, consciously and unconsciously, Harris intended Sut and his world to be that fusion of the mundane and the cosmic of which an American comic mythology was constructed in the first half of the Nineteenth Century. The geography of mountains, rivers, and states is scrambled together so that Sut bestrides the Appalachians from Virginia down through North Carolina and Tennessee into Georgia, and is everywhere at once. The physical background is vague, though Sut is fully capable of precise description. Recurrent figures and relationships offer the ingredients of a social pattern to some extent, but the resultant society is depicted far too mistily and only the peregrinations and predicaments

## INTRODUCTION

of Sut bring it into even temporary focus. Sut, like his fellows, has his skirmishes with oppressive forces such as law and religion, but is unhampered by any occupation or home which would call forth definitively-drawn relationships. The very origin of Sut is shrouded in an ambiguity going beyond the needs of simple comic effect; it is likely that Sut is indeed the offspring, not of his "king fool" father, but of the sandhill crane who pursued Mrs. Lovingood and cornered her under the bed one day.

Into that swirling mythological backdrop, with its admixture of the fantastic and the whiskey flowing through Sut's body, Harris wove the particularity of detail and largeness of substance which rescue Sut from the charge that he is merely a poor-white degenerate. With sure comic insight, Harris created a character who boasts of his scariness, his tendency to flee from the very whiff of trouble, his "natural born durned fool" spirit, his petty trickiness, and his conscienceless infliction of pain and discomfiture. Yet out of the seeming chaos and meanness of Sut's personality and actions there gradually arises a superstructure revealing that a morality and a philosophy have been in existence always; that they contain, ironically enough, numerous traditional and wholesome values.

In practically every story, except those in which he is at the receiving-end of the joke, Sut functions as a catalytic agent. The chain of events which he sets in motion is prankish and hilarious, speeded up by Sut's appearance at opportune moments as concealed devil or heavenly messenger with keen knowledge of the

secret lives of his fellows. Though sketched with incisive detail, these characters are usually broad portraits of a human trait or a social institution, sometimes both. Characters standing for authority and religion, or such failings as hypocrisy and injustice, usually become Sut's victims and are meted out the retribution which he believes they deserve. In contrast to the objects of Sut's vengeance, there are also characters who embody attributes wholly admirable: Wirt Staples, for example, is the embodiment of American physical grandeur and ready to roar challenges against the law; his wife typifies the woman who is both lover and housewife, simple in bearing, fun-loving, in tune with her husband's appetites. Scattered through the work, furthermore, are observations by Sut expounding his ideas about the cannibalism of society, the fraud of sentimentality, and the like.

It should be kept in mind that the characters, though broad in import, are not always visible as such at first glance because of their individuality as people. Furthermore, the work is kept from the dry realm of allegory by the fact that the plot events are exciting, the interaction of the characters absurd and amusing, and Sut's presence a stimulus to complications. Ultimately, however, the mythic universalities such as heroism, fertility, masculinity, and femininity emerge over a bedrock of elemental human values which Sut has carved out in the course of his adventures, values such as love, joy, truth, justice, etc. These are only some of the positive concepts which

## INTRODUCTION

Sut has admired and championed, and it is no small feat that they emerge from behind a protagonist who has ironically been deprecated by his creator. This is humor on a grand scale.

## VI

The readability of Harris has hitherto been impeded because of his dialect, through which not many people will struggle. In presenting an excerpt from "Sicily Burns's Wedding" in *Mark Twain's America*, for example, Bernard DeVoto noted that he had "transliterated Sut's dialect, for the protection of the reader." Walter Blair in *Native American Humor* (1937) and F. O. Matthiessen in *American Renaissance* (1941) similarly compensated for the relative unintelligibility of brief illustrations by replacing dialect spellings with their modern equivalents. Just how blurring Harris can be in his pure form may be seen in the dialogue and one or two sections of this book which I have left relatively intact for the purpose.

In undertaking the necessary task of simplifying the text for a book-length collection, I was guided by H. L. Mencken's *The American Language* (1936) and its *Supplement I* (1945). I have tried to perpetuate in Harris what Mencken has found in the common speech: " \* \* \* Precisely the boldness and contempt for ordered forms that are so characteristically American . . . the grotesque humor of the country, and the delight in devastating opprobriums, and the acute feeling for the succinct and savory." As much

as possible, therefore, Harris's vernacular has been left intact, as were the slang, coined words, phonetic spellings, and other peculiarities which together make up his special flavor.

Some changes were inevitable, however. The humor of the period was blighted by misspellings for superficial comic effect, and Harris was no exception. Some of his words are obsolete, and others are probably meaningless to all but a handful of contemporary readers. He was often careless, spelling the same word in more than one way; this may be charged off to his printers, of course. Finally, confusion is occasioned by his habit of running together large sections of text without adequate paragraphing, as it is also caused by his absent or faulty punctuation. In most instances calling for either modernization or improvement, propriety has not been my aim and the language of the common man has been my standard. I have not striven for absolute consistency, since it would be untrue to Harris and, too, the readability of a word often led me to decide against changing it. For example, the dialectal *thresh* might easily be confused with the standard *thresh*, so that it was revised to read *thrash*; on the other hand, *wrassle* remained because it could not be taken to mean anything but *wrestle*.

No other significant changes were made in the text except for the deletion of three lines of an extremely offensive nature and several lines from the framework in which Harris sometimes enclosed Sut's monologues. Where the latter excisions were made, it was because the lines were either excessively labored and unfunny



## INTRODUCTION

or else referred to stories not presented here. The conventional framework of frontier humor, a relic of the oral anecdote, frequently enables Harris to achieve desirable dramatic and ironic effects. Since almost all of the framework remains untouched in this book, the reader will be able to judge its worth for himself.

Those who wish to learn more about Harris will find the books cited in this Introduction to be of considerable interest. To the list they make should be added *Segments of Southern Thought* (1938) by Edd Winfield Parks. I am indebted to them all, as well as to Donald Day's *The Life and Works of George Washington Harris* (University of Chicago doctoral thesis, 1942) and *George Washington Harris* (Vanderbilt University master's thesis, 1934) by John J. Heflin, Jr. I also owe grateful thanks to Esther Levine, Librarian, The New School for Social Research, for her cooperativeness. For retaining her good spirits, and for much more too, my wife will never be properly rewarded. For whatever criticism this book requires, I stand alone.

BROM WEBER



## PREFACE

“You must have a preface, Sut; your book will then be ready. What shall I write?”

“Well, if I must, I must. For I s’pose the production could no more show itself in public without it than a coffin-maker could without black clothes. And yet what’s the use of either of ’em, in point of good sense? Smells to me sorta like a durned humbug, the whole of it—a little like cuttin of the Ten Commandments into the rind of a watermelon: it’s just slashed open and the inside et outen it, the rind and the Commandments broke all to pieces and flung to the hogs and never thought of once’t—them nor the tarnal fool what cut ’em there. But if a author *must* take off

his shoes afore he goes into the public's parlor, I reckon I kin do it without dirtyin my feet, for I has socks on.

Sometimes, George, I wishes I could read and write just a little. But then it's best as it am, for of all the fools the world has to contend with the educated ones am the worst; they breeds nigh onto all the devilment a-goin on. But I were a-thinkin: if I could write myself, it would then *really* been my book. I just tell you now; I don't like the idea of you writin a production and me a-findin the brains. 'T ain't the first case, though, on record, by a durned sight. Usin other men's brains is as lawful as usin their plunder, and just as common, so I don't care much nohow.

"I doesn't expect this-here production will sit perfectly quiet onto the stomachs of some persons: them who has a wholesome fear of the devil, and oughta have it, by Gemini. Now, for their special well-bein hereafter, I has just this to say: if you ain't fond of the smell of cracklings, stay outen the kitchen; if you is feared of smut, you needn't climb the chimney; and if the moon hurts your eyes, don't you ever look at a Dutch cheese. That's just all of it.

"Then there's some who ain't much faith in their reputation standin much of a strain. They'll be powerful careful how and where they reads my words. Now, to them I ain't one word to say. They has been preached to and prayed for now nigh onto two thousand years, and I won't dart weeds where thirty-two-pound shot bounces back.

"Then there's the book-butchers—awful on killin

and cuttin up—but could no more produce a book than a bull-butcher could produce a bull. S’pose they takes a notion to stick, skin, and cut up this-here one. If they is fond of sickenin scares, I advises ’em to take hold at once’t. But first I begs to refer ’em respectively to the fate of two misfortunate persons mentioned inside here: Parson Bullen and Sheriff Dolton. Read carefully what happened to them afore you takes any of my flesh onto your claws or my blood onto your bills . . . and that I now is a durnder fool than I were in them days, for I now considers myself a author. I has took my stand among the nations of the earth, for I, too, has made me a book; so if anybody wants dish rags, I thinks it would be more healthy for ’em not to tear ’em offen my flag.

“Most book weavers seem to be scary folks, for generally they comes up to the slaughter pen whinin and waggin their tails, a-sayin they ‘knows they is imperfect,’ that ‘you’d scarce expect one of my fit,’ and so forth, so on, so along. Now, if I *is* a-rowin in that boat, I ain’t aware of it, I ain’t; for I knows the tremendous gift I has for breedin scares among durned fools, and then I has a trustin reliance onto the fidelity, endurance, and speed of these-here legs of mine to tote me and my sins away beyond all human retributions or revenge. Now, zamine your hands, ole ferrets and weasels. And, if you don’t hold both bowers and the ace, you just ‘pass’ it.

“If any poor misfortunate devil whose heart is under a millstone; whose ragged children am hungry and no bread in the dresser; who is down in the mud

and the lucky ones a-trippin him every time he struggles to his all-fours; who has fed the famishin and is now hungry hisself; who misfortunes foller fast and foller faster; who is so footsore and weak that he wishes he were at the ferry—if such a one kin find a laugh—just one—such a laugh as is remembered with his careless boyhood—atwixt these here covers—then I'll thank God that I *has* made a book and feel that I have got my pay in full.

“Make me a nota bene, George. I wants to put somewhere atween the eyebrows of our book, in big winnin-lookin letters, the searchin, meanin words what some person writ onto a woman's garter once't long ago: *'Evil be to him that evil thinks.'*”

“Them's 'em, by jingo! Had 'em close't apast you, didn't you? I want 'em for a general scare—'specially for the women.

“Now, George, grease it good, and let it slide down the hill its own way.”

PART ONE

**IN THE  
FAMILY BOSOM**





## SUT LOVINGOOD'S DADDY, ACTING HORSE

“Hole that ar hoss down to the earth.”

“He’s a-fixin for the heavens.”

“He’s a-spreadin his tail feathers to fly. Look out, Legs, if you ain’t ready to go up’ards.”

“Whoa, Shavetail.”

“Git a fiddle; he’s tryin a jig.”

“Say, Long Legs, raised a power of corn, didn’t you?”

“’Tain’t co’n, hits redpepper.”

These and like expressions were addressed to a queer-looking, long-legged, short-bodied, small-headed, white-haired, hog-eyed, funny sort of a genius—fresh from some bench-legged Jew’s clothing store;

mounted on Tearpoke, a nick-tailed, bow-necked, long, poor, pale sorrel horse, half-dandy, half-devil, and enveloped in a perfect network of bridle, reins, crupper, martingales, straps, surcingles, and red feringing—who reined up in front of Pat Nash’s grocery among a crowd of mountaineers full of fun, foolery, and mean whiskey. This was *Sut Lovingood*.

“I say, you durned ash-cats. Just keep your shirts on, will ye? You never seed a real hoss till I rid up. You’s e p’raps stole or owned shod rabbits, or sheep with borrowed saddles on; but, when you took the first begrudgin look just now at this critter name Tearpoke, you were enjoyin a sight of next to the best hoss what ever shelled nubbins or toted jugs . . . and he’s as dead as a stillworm, poor ole Tickeytail!

“Whoa! Whoa! Tearpoke, you cussed infernal fidgety hide full of hell fire. Can’t you stand still and listen while I’s e a-polishin your character off as a mortal hoss to these-here durned fools?”

Sut’s tongue—or his spurs—brought Tearpoke into something like passable quietude, while he continued: “Say you, some of you growin hogs made a re-mark just now ’bout redpepper. I just wish to say in a general way that any words couplin redpepper and Tearpoke together am durned infernal lies.”

“What killed Tickeytail, Sut?” asked an anxious inquirer after truth.

“Why, nothin, you cussed fool. He just died so, standin up at that. Weren’t that real Castile-hoss pluck? You see, he froze stiff. No, not that exactly; but starved first, and froze after’ards; so stiff that

when Dad and me went to lay him out and we pushed him over, he stuck out just so"—spreading his arms and legs—"like onto a carpenter's bench, and we had to wait nigh onto seventeen days for him to thaw afore we could skin him."

"Skin 'im?" interrupted a rat-faced youth whittling on a corn stalk. "I thot yu wanted tu lay the hoss out."

"The hell you did! Ain't skinnin the natural way of layin out a hoss I'd like to know? See a here, sonny. You tell your Mam to have you set back just 'bout two years, for at the rate you'se a-climbin you stands a pow'ful chance to die with your shoes on and git laid out hoss-way, you does."

The rat-faced youth shut up his knife and subsided.

"Well, there we were: Dad, and me"—counting on his fingers—"and Sall, and Jake—fool Jake we calls him for short—and Jim, and Phineass, and Callimy Jane, and Sharlottynn, and me, and Zodiack, and Cashus Clay, and Noah Dan Webster, and the twin gals—Castur and Pollox—and me, and Catherine Second, and Cleopatry Antony, and Jane Barnum Lind, and me, and Benton Bullion, and the baby what ain't named yet, and me, and the Prospect, and Mam herself . . . all left in the woods alone without ary hoss to crop with."

"Youse counted yersef five times, Mister Lovin-good," said a tomato-nosed man in ragged overcoat.

"Yas, ole Still-tub; that's just the proportion I bears in the family for damn fool, leavin out Dad, of course. You just let me alone and be a-thinkin of git-

tin more hoops onto you. Youse leakin now ; see there.”

“Ha Ha!” from the crowd, and Still-tub went into the doggerly.

“Weren’t that a devil’s own mess of broth for a ’spectable white family to be sloshin about in? I be durned if I didn’t feel sorta like stealin a hoss sometimes ; and I expect I’d a-done it, but the stealin streak in the Lovingoods all run to durned fool, and the un-virtuous streak all run to legs. Just look down the side of this here hoss most to the ground. Does you see ’em?”

“Well, we waited, and wished, and rested, and planned, and wished, and waited agin until nigh onto strawberry time, hopin some stray hoss might come along. But dog my cats, if any such good luck ever comes within reach of where Dad is ; he’s so dod-drat-ted mean and lazy and ugly and savage, and durn fool to kill.

“Well, one night he lay awake till cock-crowin—a-snortin, and rollin, and blowin, and shufflin, and scratchin hissself, and a-whisperin at Mam a heap—and at breakfast I found out what it meant.

“Says he: ‘Sut, I’ll tell yu what we’ll du. I’ll be hoss *myself* and pull the plow whilst yu drives me ; and then the Ole Quilt’—he meant that for Mam—‘an’ the brats kin plant ur tend ur jis’ let hit alone es they darn please . . . I ain’t a-carin.’

“So out we went to the pawpaw thicket and peeled a right smart chance of bark, and Mam and me made gears for Dad while he set on the fence, a-lookin at us and studyin pow’ful. I after’ards found out he were

a-studyin how to play the character of a hoss perfectly.

“Well, the gears become him mightily and nothin would do him but he must have a bridle. So I gits a umbrella brace—it’s a little forked piece of square wire ’bout a foot long; like a young pitchfork, you know—and twisted it sorta into a bridle bit, snaffle shape. Dad wanted it made curb, as he hadn’t worked for a good while and said he might sorta feel his keepin and go to ravin and cavortin.

“When we got the bridle fixed onto Dad, don’t you b’lieve he set in to chompin it just like a real hoss and tried to bite me on the arm—he allers were a most complicated durned ole fool, and Mam said so when he weren’t about. I put on the gears and, while Mam were a-tyin the belly band, a-strainin it pow’ful tight, he dropped onto his hands, said ‘Whay-a-a’ like a mad hoss would, and slung his hind legs at Mam’s head.

“She’d stepped back a little and were standin with her arms crossed, a-restin ’em on her stomach, and his heel taps come within a inch of her nose. Says she: ‘Yu plays hoss better nur yu dus husban’.

“He just run back’ards on all fours and kicked at her agin, and—and pawed the ground with his fists.

“‘Lead him off tu the field, Sut, afore he kicks ur bites sumbody,’ says Mam.

“I shouldered the gopher plow and took hold of the bridle. Dad leaned back sulky till I said ‘Cluck cluck’ with my tongue, then he started. When we come to the fence I let down the gap, and it made Dad mad: he wanted to jump it on all fours hoss-way. Oh, Gem-

ini! What a durned ole fool kin come to if he gives up to the complaint!

“I hitched him to the gopher, a-watchin him pow’ful close’t, for I’d seed how quick he could drop onto his hands and kick, and away we went: Dad leanin for’ard to his pullin. And we made right purt plowin for to have a green hoss and bark gears. He went over the sprouts and bushes same as a real hoss, only he travelled on two legs.

“I were mightily hoped up ’bout corn; I could a’most see it a-comin up; but there’s a heap of whiskey spilt twixt the counter and the mouth, even if it ain’t got but two foot to travel.

“ ’Bout the time Dad were beginnin to break sweat, we come to a sassafrack bush and, to keep up his character as a hoss, he bulged square into and thru it—tearin down a bald hornets’ nest nigh onto as big as a hoss’s head, and the whole tribe covered him as quick as you could cover a sick pup with a saddle blanket. He lit onto his hands agin and kicked straight up once’t. Then he reared and fetched a squeal worse nor ary stud hoss in the State, and set in straight to runnin away just as natural as you ever seed any other scared hoss do.

“I let go the line and hollered ‘Whoa, Dad, whoa!’—but you might just as well say ‘Whoa’ to a locomotive or ‘Suke, cow’ to a gal.

“Geewhillikins! How he run! When he come to bushes, he’d clear the top of ’em with a squeal, gopher plow and all. P’raps he thought there might be another settlement of bald hornets there, and it were

safer to go over than thru, and quicker done anyhow. Every now and then he'd fan the side of his head, first with one foreleg and then t'other; then he give hisself a round-handed slap what sounded like a wagon whip onto the place where the breechbands tetches a hoss—a-runnin all the time and a-carryin that-there gopher just 'bout as fast and as high from the earth as ever any gopher were carried, I'll swear.

“When he come to the fence, he just tore thru it, bustin and scatterin nigh onto seven panels with lots of broken rails. Right here he left the gopher, gears, clothes, clevis, and swingletrees—all mixed up and not worth a durn. Most of his shirt stayed onto the end of a rail, and nigh onto a pint of hornets stopped there, a-stingin all over—its smell fooled 'em. The balance on 'em, nigh onto a gallon, kep' on with Dad.

“He seemed to run just exactly as fast as a hornet could fly. It were the tightest race I ever seed for one hoss to git all the whippin. Down thru a sage field they all went—the hornets makin it look like there were smoke round Dad's bald head—and he with nothin on the green earth in the way of clothes about him but the bridle, and nigh onto a yard of plowline sailin behind with a tired-out hornet ridin on the point of it.

“I seed that he were aimin for the swimmin hole in the crick, where the bluff am over twenty-five foot perpendicular to the water and it's nigh onto ten foot deep. Well, to keep up his character as a hoss plumb thru, when he got to the bluff he loped off, or rather just kep' on a-runnin. ‘Kerslunge’ into the crick he

went. I seed the water fly plumb above the bluff from where I were.

“Now, right there, boys, he overdid the thing, if actin hoss to the scribe were what he were after . . . for there’s nary hoss ever foaled durned fool enough to lope over any such place. A cussed mule mighta done it, but Dad weren’t actin mule even though he oughta took that character: it’s exactly suited to his disposition, all but the not-breedin.

“I crept up to the edge and peeped over. There were Dad’s bald head—for all the earth like a peeled onion—a-bobbin up and down and around; and the hornets sailin round turkey buzzard-fashion and every once’t in a while one, and sometimes ten, would take a dip at Dad’s bald head. He kep’ up a right purt dodgin-under, sometimes afore they hit him and sometimes after’ard, and the water were covered with drowned bald hornets.

“To look at it from the top of the bluff, it were pow’ful interestin and sorta funny—I were on the bluff myself, mind you. Dad couldn’t see the funny part from where he were, but it seemed to be interestin to him from the ’tention he were payin to the business of divin and cussin.

“Says I: ‘Dad, if you’s done washin yourself, and has drunk enough, le’s go back to our plowin; it will soon be pow’ful hot.’

“ ‘Hot, hell!’ says Dad. ‘It am hot right now. Don’t’—and under went his head—‘yer see’—dip—‘these cussed’—dip—‘infernal’—dip—‘varmint arter me?’ Dip.



“ ‘What?’ says I. ‘Them are hossflies there, Dad. That’s natural, Dad. You ain’t really feared of them, is you?’

“ ‘Hossflies, hell an’—dip—‘durnation!’ says Dad. ‘They’s rale ginuine’—dip—‘ball ho’nets’—dip—‘yu infernal ignurant cuss!’ Dip.

“ ‘Kick ’em . . . bite ’em . . . paw ’em . . . switch ’em with your tail, Dad,’ says I.

“ ‘Oh, sonny, sonny’—dip—‘how I’ll sweeten yure sturn’—dip—‘when these’—dip—‘ho’nets leave yere.’

“ ‘You’d better do the leavin yourself, Dad,’ says I.

“ ‘Leave yere! Yu damn fool! How’—dip—‘kin I’—dip—‘when they won’t’—dip—‘let me stay’—dip—‘atop’—dip—‘the warter even?’

“ ‘Well, Dad, you’ll have to stay there till night and, after they goes home to roost, you come home. I’ll have your feed in the trough ready; you won’t need any curryin tonight, will you?’

“ ‘I wish’—dip—‘I may never’—dip—‘see tomor-rer ef I’—dip—‘don’t make’—dip—‘hamstrings’—dip—‘outer yure hide’—dip—‘when I dus’—dip—‘git outen yere,’ says Dad.

“ ‘Better say you wish you may never see another bald hornet if you ever play hoss agin,’ says I.

“ ‘Them words tetcht Dad to the heart and I felt they must be my last, knowin Dad’s unmollified nature. I broke from them parts and sorta come over here to the copper mines.

“ ‘When I got to the house: ‘Whar’s yer Dad?’ says Mam.

“ ‘Oh, he turned durn fool and run away; busted

everything all to cussed smash, and's in the swimmin hole a-divin after minnows. Look out, Mam, he'll come home with a angel's temper. Better send for some strong man-body to keep him from huggin you to death.'

" 'Law sakes!' says Mam. 'I knowed he cudn't act hoss fur ten minutes wifout actin infunnel fool, to save his life.'

"I stayed hid out until next afternoon, and I seed a feller a-travellin. Says I: 'Howdy do, mister. What were a-goin on at the cabin, this side the crick, when you passed there?'

" 'Oh, nuthin much. Only a pow'ful fat man were a-lyin in the yard onto his belly with no shut on, an' a 'oman were a-greasin of his shoulders an' arms outen a gourd. A pow'ful curious, vicious, skeery-lookin cuss he is, to b'sure. His head am as big as a washpot, and he hasn't the fust durned sign of an eye—jist two black slits. Is thar much smallpox roun' yere?'

" 'Small, hell!' says I. 'No sir!'

" 'Been much fightin in this neighborhood lately?'

" 'None worth speakin of,' says I.

" 'He scratched his head. 'Nur French measles?'

" 'Not just close't,' says I.

" 'Well, do you know what ails that man back thar?'

" 'Just gittin over a violent attack of damn fool,' says I.

" 'Well, who is he anyhow?'

"I riz to my feet and stretched out my arm, and says I: Stranger, that man is my Dad!'

“He looked at my legs and personal features a moment, and says he: ‘Yas, damn ef he ain’t.’

“Now, boys, I ain’t seed Dad since, and I doesn’t have much appetite to see him for some time to come. Le’s all drink! Here’s luck to the durned ole fool, and the hornets too. . . .”



PART TWO

**SUT  
AS  
A BOY**



## OLD SKISSIM'S MIDDLE BOY

When I were a little over half-grown, had sprouted my tail feathers and were beginnin to crow, there were a-livin in my neighborhood a dreadful fat, mean, lazy boy 'bout my age. He were the middle son of a ole lark, name Skissim, who tinkered onto ole clocks and spinnin wheels, ate lye hominy, and exhorted at meetin for a livin while this middle son of his'n did the sleepin for the whole family. This boy could beat a hog and a hungry dog eatin, and then beat his eatin with his sleepin even though his eatin beat the eatin of a rat after bein shut in a church, or the eatin of a snake in a jug with no mouth to it. They waked him to eat, and then had to wake him agin to make him

quit eatin; waked him to go to the spring, and waked him to start back agin; waked him to say his prayers, and waked him to stop sayin them. In fact, they were allers a-wakin him, and he were allers a-goin to sleep agin.

Ole Skissim waked him with a wagon whip bearin a buckshot in the cracker, what he toted a-purpose. His mam waked him with the tea-kettle and scaldin water. Both the buckshot cracker and the water lost their virtue at last, and they just give him over to unendin sleepin and unmitigated hardness of head. Charley Dickens's son, the fat boy, might been as nigh kin to him as a second cousin if his Mam were a pow'ful wakeful woman.

I hadn't found out then, certainly, that I were a natural-born durned fool. I sorta suspicioned it, but still had hopes. So I were fool enough to think I were smart enough to break him from snoozin *all* the time.

I lay wake of nights for a week, fixin the way to do it. And that minds me to tell you what I thinks of plannin and studyin: it am generally no-count. All 'pends at last on what you does and how you carries yourself *at the moment of action*. Circumstances turn about pow'ful fast, and all you kin do is to think just as fast as they kin turn, and just as they turn; and if you do this, I'm durned if you don't git out somehow. Long studyin am like preparin a supply of water into a worm-hole barrel to put out fire: when the fire does come, durned if you don't have to hustle round pow'ful fast and git more water, for there's none in the barrel. But as I were tellin you, I studied



out at last a plan what I thought would wake the Devil. And I set in to carryin it out.

The ole man Skissim and his wife went to a night meetin and took the balance of his, or rather *her* brats—a feller should allers be pow'ful careful in speakin on that point. I'se allers heerd that it took a monstrous-wise brat to know its daddy, and I think it takes a wiser daddy to know his own brats. Dad never would speak certain 'bout any of our family but *me*. He 'counted for that by sayin I were by a long shot too cussed a fool to belong to anybody else, so I *am* a Lovingood. My long legs sometimes sorta bothers me. But then Mam took a pow'ful scare at a sand-hill crane a-sittin on a peeled well-pole, and she outrun her shadow thirty yards in comin half a mile. I expect I owes my legs and speed to that circumstance and not to any fraud on Mam's part.

Well, the Skissims went to night meetin and left the middle son in the kitchen, fast asleep, believin to find him right there when they come back. They were mistakened that pop, for when they come they found the widest-awake boy ever borned in that or any other house, or ouden doors either. And as to bein right there, he weren't by a durned sight. He were here, there, and everywhere at the same time, and if he had any appetite for vittles just then, he didn't hang out his sign that I could see.

They had left him sittin onto a split-bottom chair, plumb asleep all over, even to his ole hat. I took about thirty foot of clothesline and tied him to the chair by his neck, body, and arms, leavin his legs loose. He

looked sorta like the lion in the spellin-book when the rat were a-cuttin a fish net off of him. That weren't a scared rat, were he? I had him safe now to practice on, and I set in to doin it, sorta this way. I painted his face the color of a nigger coal-burner, except a white ring round his eyes. From the corners of his mouth, sorta downwards, slouch-wise, I left a white strip. It made his mouth look sorta like onto a hoss track and nigh onto as big. He were a fine picture to study if your mind were fond of scary things. He looked savage as a set steel trap baited with arsenic, and were just fit for treason, stratagem, and to spoil things. To this day, when I dreams of the Devil, Dad, Parson Bullen, and other awful oppressive things, that infernal boy—as he looked that night—am durned intermittently mixed with the whole of 'em. I expect he's dead is the reason of it.

I screwed onto each of that boy's ears a pair of iron hand-vices what his dad squeezed ole clocks and cracked walnuts with. They hung down like over-grown earrings. I tied a gridiron to one ankle and a pair of firetongs to t'other. I poured a bottle of ground red-pepper down his back under his shirt. I turned loose a pint of June bugs—what I ketched a-purpose—into his bosom and buttoned 'em up. I tied a basket full of firecrackers to the chair back, to his hair, and to his wrists. I buttoned up a big, grey-whiskered, aggravated ole rat—tied with a string—into the slack of that boy's britches. T'other end of the string were fastened onto his gallus button.

The rat, like all the rest of that tribe, immediately

set in cuttin his way out. But owin to his perverse nature or the darkness of the place, he set in to cuttin the wrong way. He were a-workin towards the backbone, and further from the britches, every cut. I learnt this fact from the chair risin from the floor and fallin agin just to rise immediately a little higher—and from sounds—a mixture of snort, snore, grunt, and groan—which that boy were beginnin to issue tolerable fast, and gettin louder every bounce of the chair, and becomin more like onto a howl every pop. In the beginnin of his uneasiness he dreamed of wagon whip. Next he dreamed of a tea-kettle as big as a still, and lots of boiling water. Next he dreamed of both of 'em. Now he were a-dreamin that the tea-kettle were a steam engine a-drivin the wagon whip and a cotton gin with red-hot saws fifteen hundred licks a minute, and that *he were in the cotton hopper*.

I now thought it nigh onto the proper time to tetch the firecrackers, so as to have everything bear its share in the contemplated comin wakenin. And I did it. The first handful or so goin off helped, with the industry of that energetic old rat, the searchin of the red pepper, and the promiscuous scratchin-round of the bugs, to begin to wake him sorta gradually—a little faster nor light bread rises and a little slower than a earthquake wakes weasels. A few hundred more crackers goin off, still havin the rat, pepper, and insects to back 'em, got him wide-enough awake to believe that he were threatened with some awful personal calamity what wanted pow'ful quick work on his part to dodge. He were awake now all over, even to his

durned ole hat, and he showed it in as many ways as a cat does locked up in a empty room with a strange and enterprisin big dog.

He grabbed the fire shovel and bounced half-bent—the chair kept him from straightenin up—all over that kitchen, a-stricken over-handed, under-handed, up-handed, down-handed, and left-handed at every 'spicious shadow he seed. He fought by the light of ten million sparks; he were as active as a smut-machine in full blast and every grain of wheat a spark. And he were a-hollerin everything anybody ever did holler in dreadful tribulation of spirit, even to “Now I lay me down to sleep” and “Gloree.”

When I'se in trouble, scare, or torment, I does but one thing, and that's unresistable, unequalled, and durned-fast runnin. I just keeps at it till I gits comfort. Now his big idea under nice and variegated hurtin were to fight, and keep on a-fightin, until peace of mind come. I never seed such carryin's-on in all my borned days. He made more fuss, hit more licks at more things, were in more places and in more shapes in a shorter time than any mortal auctioneer could tell if he had as many tongues as a basket full of buckles. Every now and then he'd give his head a vicious, vig'rous shake, and the hand-vices clamped to his ears would hit him fore and after till his skull rattled like onto a ole gourd.

The ole Skissim and his tribe come home from meetin and, hearin the unearthly riot, thought somebody had opened a doggery in their kitchen, and that a neighborhood fight were goin on, and every feller's

dog along. They rushed in to drive out the crowd and capture the whiskey, and a durnder more misfortunate mistake never were made by a man, woman, and a string of fifteen brats since ole Bill Shivers went for a runnin threshin-machine, thinkin it were a big music box.

The ole hoss Skissim hisself immediately come in contact with a wholesome knockdown, what calmed him into something monstrous like sleep for about a minute. Now a heap of things can happen in a minute, particularly if there's somebody who has set his whole soul to the business of makin 'em happen. It were so in that kitchen.

Afore the ole feller come to, the ole woman were knocked head-first into the meal-barrel, where she were breathin more meal nor air, and she were snortin it up over the edges of the barrel like it were a fountain playin corn meal. The oldest gal were stern-first in a soap-kettle, and she were a-makin suds outen some of it. The next one were lengthwise belly-down in the pot corner. The biggest boy were where the back-log oughta been, onto his all-fours a-scratchin up all the embers and ashes, a-tryin to come out from there. Another cub, in a jacket with a one-inch tail, were knocked plumb through the tin into the safe, among the cold vittles and things. A little gal, doll baby and all, were on the top shelf of the cupboard, among the delf, a-screamin like a little steam whistle.

The neighbors were a-gatherin in round the noise and rumpus, and not a durned one had the least idea of what were wrong, exceptin of me. I understood it

all, durned fool as I is. To 'scape from bein 'spicioned, I set in to cuttin the chair loose as I got chances, a-keepin outen the range of that flyin fire shovel, for it were still spreadin hurtin and mischief on a perpetual-motion plan. Everything it tetched fell, and everything it come agin got grief. The tin buckets looked like drunk men's hats. Pails had left their hoops, and the delf-ware was in scrimptions. When the boy got divorced from the chair, I thought he'd sorta simmer down. But no sir! He got worse and did his work faster and better; he were as crazy as a bed-bug, and as savage as a mad-dog.

I seed a-comin a ole widder what were a pow'ful, pious-turned person in the same church with ole Skissim, and she were the news-carrier general of the neighborhood. Folks said that they both had a religious feelin for each other what led to many love-feasts, with nobody at 'em but theirselves, and were both doin monstrous well considerin the thorn in the flesh.

Says she: "Oh, my soul! Do tell me what *has* happened?"

"Oh, lordy massy!" said I. "It's a-happenin yet," a-lookin awful solemn in the moonshine. Says I: "I'll tell you, as I knows you won't speak of it; for if it gits out, it might make the people sorta think hard of Mister Skissim. He come home from meetin plumb crazy, talkin about the Seventh Commandment, and he's set into murderin his folks with a crowbar. He has done got his wife and six of the brats—they're a-lyin in there as cold as kraut—and he's hot after the

rest of 'em. Says he's in a hurry to git through, as he has *you* to kill and salt down afore day. Now I know by that he's turned durned fool."

The ole widder never said a word, but put out for Squire Haley's and swore her life agin ole Skissim, and took out a warrant for him a-chargin murder, arson, blasphemy, fleabottomry, and rape. It scared ole Skissim until he run away.

By the time I got done enlightenin the widder, that-there unquenchable boy had the kitchen all to hisself. Everybody were feared to go nigh the door. Now you couldn't guess in ten year what he then went and did. He just made a pillow outen the chair and set in to sleepin agin. If ever I'se called on to stop his sleepin any more agin, I'll try a musket and sixteen buckshot at just about ten steps.

## A RAZOR-GRINDER IN A THUNDER-STORM

“From the awful faces you’s a-makin at that-there scrap of lookin-glass, you wants to scare your picture or you’s et somethin what has cuttin edges. Which is it, George?”

“Neither,” said I.

“Well, p’raps somebody has been a-cuttin shoe-strings outen a sandy deerskin with your razor; you wants it ground, don’t you? Bake Boyd’s man coulda done it.”

“Who was Bake Boyd’s man? Was he a Negro?”

“Worse nor that. He were a mighty mean Yankee razor-grinder what once’t come to Knoxville a-foot-back, with a machine strapped onto his shoulders like



onto a patent corn-sheller; and he narrated it about that he would grind razors and scissors or point needles monstrous cheap. He soon got to grindin away first-rate. He were a pow'ful slow-speakin, dignified-sorta varmint, and thought that hisself and machine commanded the respect and submission of the population wherever he went.

“That idea were chased outen his skull *thru* his ears monstrous quick at Knoxville. He couldn't have come to a better place than it were in them days for sweepin out the inside of stuffed-up fellers' skulls clean of all ole rusty, cobweb, bigoted ideas . . . and then a-fillin it up fresh with somethin new and active. And in the new 'sortment were allers one king idea sure, and it were in words sorter so: ‘*If I gits away alive, durn if ever I come here agin.*’ I expect nigh onto a thousand fellers, off and on, come to that ole town sufferin pow'ful with a unintermittent attack of swell-head; and every durned one of 'em left there with the words I spoke just now a-droppin offen their limber under-lips, sorta like a ole heartbroken hoss slobbers.

“Bake Boyd—Bake were the short for Bacon, and Bacon were his nickname, you know—were nigh onto as clever a feller as ever were borned. There were durned little weevil in his wheat, mighty small chance of water in his whiskey, and not a drop of streaked blood in his veins. But he *had* a besettin sin: he were pow'fully possessed with the Devil. He were so chock full of it that his hair wouldn't lie still. He watched for *openins* to work off some kind of devilment just as

close't as a ole woman—what were once't unsanctified herself—watches her daughters when a circus or a camp meetin am in heat.

“Well, Bake thought he seed a openin in that-there razor-grindin establishment. So he set in to make the durned fool b'lieve that lecturin onto the science of razor sharpenin were his special gift, and that right *there* were the place to try that sock on. Bake dwelt long onto the crop of dimes to be gathered from that field; that he'd make more than there were spots onto forty fawns in July, not to speak of the big gobs of reputation he'd tote away—a-shinin all over his clothes like lightnin bugs onto a dog fennel top.

“The argument fetched him, particularly the spotted fawn part of it. But he were a Yankee, and wanted to know—afore he begun—how many spots there were onto *one* fawn. So he went to the stable and asked ole Dick, Bake's hostler.

“The ole nigger scratched his head and told him: ‘Marster, I'se never counted 'em, but I specks thar am a gallon, shuah and sartin.’

“The Yankee got Bake to git some 'vertisements printed and stuck up all over town. Bake showed that he understood the 'vertisement business, for he put the picture of a rearin stud-hoss at the top; a runaway buck nigger with a bundle each side; while two barrels marked whiskey, a wool-cardin machine, and a cider mill topped off the bottom.

“While Bake were a-doin of this, ole Grinder were a-writin out the lecture. It were a complicated sort of document—talked sorta like a feller would to a

constable to take his mind offen the warrant he knowed the constable had for him until he seed a chance to run. It spoke in particular of the comet, Niagray Falls, the Millenium, hatchin chickens, fallin from grace, makin mush outen sawdust, and generally of everything on the A'mighty's green earth exceptin razor grindin and the depravity of man when he am a boy. He oughtn't to have left that point out, for it were boys what he were dealin with just then, and a right-tight preacher might have called them depraved, or unsanctified at the least.

“Well, that night the Court House were plumb full. Everybody were there, exceptin Lum Jones, and he were hid out from the Free Masons. Bake set ahind the lecturin machine, to read from the paper to him when he forgot what were in it. There were fetched into the yard—close't to the winder where they were a-standin—a ole brass cannon full to the muzzle with powder and red clay. Up in the loft—by a trap door and plumb over the Yankee's head—set Joe Jackson, a-holdin onto a half barrellful of water outen a puddle where a misfortunate dead sow had been floatin for ten days.

“Well, the lecture begun and promised to last till daybreak, for the machine soon stalled; and Bake's duty were to give it oil by readin from the paper, but he read so low that the man couldn't make out what he said, so the man twisted round his head and whispered 'louder and plainer.' Bake, instead of doin better, got worse: set into readin in some foreign tongue, sorta like Cherokee with a sprinkle of Irish. It were loud

enough—so far so good—but it lacked a durned sight of bein plainer. The razor renovator stood with his head high and square to the congregation, his eyes takin a sight just above their heads and a-gittin rounder and bigger at every word; you could see the whites all round them; and he were a-pursin up his mouth like onto a tied bag. I were listenin for him to whistle next thing.

“‘Tshish! Tshish!’ sorta low-like now begun to come outen the women and boys all over the house. The ole men’s specks begun to shine and their mouth ends had started to’ard their ears.

“The feller hissself begun to twist sorter like pissants were surveyin a railroad route up his legs. Eyes still spreadin, and the Cherokee gittin louder—not a durned word in English—when ‘bo-lang’ went the cannon, lightin up all the town, smashin in the windows, and shakin down the plasterin. Immediately Joe Jackson upset the keg: ‘kerswish-selush’ come the water onto Mr. Grinder’s head, every drop of it.

“For a moment, he looked like a iron statue of a durned fool in a playin fountain. He were dressed in linen bobtail coat and trousers, and no drawers; the water made them hug him pow’ful close’t and look a heap thinner; you could see the exact length of his shirt tail, the width of the hem, and even to the moles on his legs and the hair on his shins.

“He come to hissself like he were used to bein ducked, shook the water offen hissself like onto a dog, and says he: ‘Ladies and gentlemen. When I seed the lightnin and heerd the thunder, I ’spected a pow’ful

rain storm, and it am here.' Here he took a smell of first one coat-sleeve and then t'other, and turned up the point of his nose. 'So, owin to the inclemency of the night, I dismiss this here congregation sine die.' Here he took another smell at his sleeve. 'And, if you hasn't been vaccinated for the yaller fever, cholery, and the black tongue, you'd better leave this-here town, for they's *all* a-comin if there's anythin in the smell of a rain.'

"Nobody claimed back their dime; and Bake can't, for the soul of him, fix that case up to this day: who got the best of it—the razor grinder or t'other side? Sometimes he thinks one, sometimes t'other."

While Sut was telling this story, a fat-headed young man listened throughout without moving a muscle of his face. When it was finished, he raised his expressionless eyes and asked: "Did anybody laugh at the unfortunate man that night, Mr. Lovingood?"

Sut eyed him for a moment, from head to foot and back again, with an expression of supreme contempt; and shambling off, looking back over his shoulder, said: "You must be a damn fool."



PART THREE

**SUT AND  
THE BURNS FAMILY**





## BLOWN UP WITH SODA

“George, did you ever see Sicily Burns? Her dad lives at the Rattlesnake Spring, out onto the Georgia line.”

“Yes, a very handsome girl.”

“‘Handsome!’ That-there word don’t cover the case. It sounds sorta like callin good whiskey ‘strong water’ when you are ten mile from a stillhouse, it’s a-rainin, and your flask only half-full. She shows among women like a sunflower among dog fennel, or a hollyhock in a patch of smartweed. Such a bosom! Just think of two snow balls with a strawberry stuck butt-ended into both on ’em. She takes exactly fifteen inches of garter clear of the knot, stands sixteen and a half-hands high, and weighs one hundred and twen-

ty-six in her petticoat-tail afore breakfast. She couldn't crawl through a whiskey-barrel—with both heads stove out—nor sit in a common armchair, while you could lock the top hoop of a churn, or a big dog collar, round the huggin place.”

“The *what*, Sut?”

“The *waist*, you durn uninitiated gourd you! Her hair's as black as a crow's wing at midnight, or a nigger handlin charcoal when he's had no breakfast; it am as slick as this-here bottle, and as long as a hoss's tail. I've seed her jump over a split-bottom chair without showin her ankles, or ketchin her dress onto the knobs. She could cry and laugh at the same time, and either loved or hated you all over. If her hate fell onto you, you'd feel like you'd been whipped with a poison vine—or a broom made outen nettles—when your britches and shirt were both in the wash-tub. She carried enough devil about her to run crazy a big settlement of Job's children. Her skin were as white as the inside of a frogstool, and her cheeks and lips as rosy as a perch's gills in dogwood-blossom time. And such a smile! Why, when it struck you fair and square, it felt just like a big horn of unrectified ole Monongahela after you'd been sober for a month, attendin of a ten-hoss prayer-meetin twice't a day and most of the nites.

“Three of her smiles when she were a-tryin of herself, taken carefully ten minutes apart, would make the grand captain of a temp'rance society so durned drunk he wouldn't know his britches from a pair of bellowses, or a pledge from a—a—water-pot.

“Oh! I be durned if it’s any use talkin. That-there gal could make me murder ole Bishop Soul hisself, or kill Mam, not to speak of Dad, if she just hinted she wanted such a thing done. Such a woman could do more devilment nor a loose stud-hoss at a muster ground, if she only knew what tools she totes; and I’s sorta beginnin to think she knows the use of the last durned one to a dot. Her ankles were as round and not much bigger nor the wrist of a rifle-gun; and when she were a dancin, or makin up a bed, or gittin over a fence—oh, durn such women! Why ain’t they all made on the hempbrake plan, like Mam or Betts Carr or Suke Miller, so they wouldn’t bother a feller’s thinker at all.

“George, this world am all wrong anyhow. More temptation than preventative. If it were equal, I’d stand it. What kin the old preachers and the ugly women expect of us, exposed as we are to such inventions as Sicily am? Oh, it’s just no use in their talkin and groanin and sweatin theirselves about it; they must just upset nature onto her head and keep her there, or shet up. Let’s taste this-here whiskey.”

Sut continued, wipin his mouth on his shirt-sleeve: “I’s heerd in the mountains a first-rate, fourth-proof smash of thunder come unexpected and shake the earth, bringin along a string of lightnin as long as a quarter-track and as bright as a welding heat, a-racin down a big pine tree, tearin it into broom splits and tooth-pickers, and raisin a cloud of dust and bark and a army of limbs with a smell sorta like the Devil were about, and the long, darning-needle

leaves fallin round with a *tith—tith* quiet-sorta sound and then a-quiverin on the earth as little snakes die. And I felt queer in my innards, sorta half-comfort, with a little glad and right-smart of sorry mixed with it.

“I’se seed the rattlesnake square hissself to come at me, a-sayin ‘Z-e-e-e-e’ with that noisy tail of his’n, and I felt queer agin—monstrous queer. I’ve seed the Oconee River jumpin mad from rock to rock with its clear, cool water . . . white foam . . . and music—”

“What, Sut?”

“Music. The rushin water does make music. So does the wind, and the fire in the mountain, and it give me an uneasy queerness again. But every time I looked at that gal Sicily Burns, I had all the feelins mixed up—of the lightnin, the river, and the snake—with a touch of the quicksilver sensation a-huntin through all my veins for my ticklish place.

“To gather it all in a bunch and tie it, she were gal all over, from the point of her toe-nails to the end of the longest hair on the highest knob on her head—gal all the time, everywhere, and one of the excitingest kind. Of course I leaned up to her, as close’t as I dare to, and in spite of these-here legs and my appetite for whiskey, that-there shirt-skinnin business and Dad’s actin hoss, she sorta leaned to me just a scrimption, sorta like a careful man salts other people’s cattle in the mountain, barely enough to bring ’em back to the lickbog some day—that’s the way she salted me, and I attended the lick-log as regular as the old bell cow. *And* I were just beginnin to

think I were onto the right trail to as much comfort and stayin awake a-purpose as ole Brigham Young with all his saddle-colored women, and the papers to fetch more if he wants 'em.

“Well, one day a cussed, palaverin, onion-eatin Yankee peddler—all jack-knife and jaw—come to ole man Burns with a carryall full of apple-parin machines, jews-harps, calico, ribbons, sody-powder, and other durned truck.

“Now mind, I’d never heerd tell of sody-powder in *my* borned days; I didn’t know it from Belshazzar’s off ox. But I knows now that it am worse nor gunpowder for hurtin, and durned nigh as smart to go off.

“That-there Yankee peddler has my pious-est prayer: I just wish I had a keg of powder into his cussed paunch, with a slow match comin out at his mouth, and I had a chunk of fire. The feller what found a morsel of him big enough to feed a cockroach oughta be turned loose to pasture among seventy-five pretty women and set up in whiskey for life, because of his good eyes in huntin lost things. George, a Yankee peddler’s soul would have more room in a turnip-seed to fly round in than a leatherwing bat has in a meetin-house. That’s just so.

“Sicily had bought a tin box of the cold boiling truck and hid it till I come to the lick-log agin, you know. Well, I just happened to pass next day, and of course stopped to enjoy a look at the temptation, and she were mighty lovin to me. I never felt the like—put one arm round my neck and t’other where the sur-

cingle goes round a hoss, took the inturn onto me with her left foot, and give me a kiss.

“Says she: ‘Sutty, love, I’s e got somethin fur you: *a new sensation. . .*’

“And I b’lieve in it strong, for I begun to feel it pow’ful. My toes felt like I were in a warm crick with minnows a-nibblin at ’em. A cold streak were a-racin up and down my back like a lizzard with a turkey hen after him. My hands took the ague, and my heart felt hot and unsatisfied-like. Then it were that I’d a-cut ole Soul’s throat with a handsaw and never batted my eye, if she’d a-hinted the necessity.

“Then she poured ’bout ten blue papers of the fiz-zling powder into a great big tumbler, and as many white papers into another; and put nigh onto a pint of water into both of ’em; stirred em up with a case-knife and gritted a morsel of nutmeg on top—the deceitful she-torment lookin as solemn as a jackass in a snowstorm when the fodder give out.

“She held one tumbler and told me to drink t’other. I swallered it at one run; tasted sorta salty-like, but I thought it were part of the ‘sensation.’ But I were slightly mistakened; it were yet to come, and weren’t long about it, hoss, better b’lieve. ’Ternally durn all sensations of every spot and stripe! I say. Then she give me t’other, and I sent it a-chasin the first installment to the sag of my paunch, race-hoss way. You see, I’d got the idea under my hair that it were *love powders*, and I’d swallered the Devil red-hot from home a-thinkin that. Love powders *from her!* Just

think of it yourself solemnly a minute, and sit still if you kin.

“Just ’bout the time I were ketchin my breath, I thought I’d swallered a threshin-machine in full blast with a couple of bull-dogs, and they had set into fightin; and I felt somethin comin up my swaller monstrous like a high-pressure steamboat. I could hear it a-snortin, and sizzin.

“*‘Ketched agin, by the great golly!’* thought I. ‘Same family disposition to make a durned fool of myself just as often as the sun sets, and fifteen times oftener if there’s half a chance.’ Durn Dad every-more, amen! I say.

“I happened to think of my hoss, and I broke for him. I stole a hangdog look back and there lay Sicily, flat of her back in the porch, clappin her hands, screamin with laughin, her feet up in the air, a-kickin ’em a-past each other like she were tryin to kick her slippers off. I’se pow’ful sorry I were too busy to look at ’em.

“There were a road of foam from the house to the hoss two-foot wide and shoe-mouth deep—looked like it had been snowin—a-poppin and a-hissin and a-boilin like a tub of soapsuds with a red-hot mole-board in it. I gathered a cherry-tree limb as I run, and I lit a-straddle of ole Blacky, a-thrashin his hide like the Devil beatin tanbark and a-hissin worse nor four thousand mad ganders outen my mouth, eyes, nose, and ears. All this waked the ole hoss, and he fetched one rear, one kick, and then he went—he just mizzled,

scared. Oh, lordy! How the foam rolled and the hoss flew!

“As we turned the corner of the garden lot, I heerd Sicily call as clear as a bugle: ‘Hole hit down, Mister Lovingood! Hole hit down! Hit’s a cure fur puppy love. Hole hit *down!*’

“‘Hole hit down!’ Who ever heerd such a unpossible—why, *right then* I were a-feelin the bottom of my paunch comin up after it, inside out, just like the bottom of a green champagne bottle. I were expectin to see it every blast. That, with what Sicily said, were a-hurtin my thinker pow’ful bad; and then the ice-water idea that it weren’t a love-powder—after all that hurtin, taken all together, I were sorta wishin it might keep on till I were all boiled to foam, plumb to my heel-strings.

“I were aimin for Doctor Goodman’s—at the Hiwassee Copper Mine—to git somethin to simmer it down with, when I met ole Clapshaw, the circuit rider, a-travellin towards somebody’s hot biscuit and fried chicken. As I come tearin along, he held up his hands like he wanted to pray for me. But as I wanted somethin to reach further, and take a ranker hold nor his prayers could, I just rambled ahead. I were hot after a ten-hoss, double-actin, steam paunch-pump with one end socked deep into my soda lake and a strong, man-body doctor at t’other; it were my *big want* just then.

“Ole Clapshaw took a scare, as I were comin straight for him. His faith give out and he dodged—flat hat, hoss, and saddle-bags—into the thicket. I seed his



hoss's tail fly up over his back as he disappeared into the bushes; there musta been spurrin going on 'bout there. I liked his motions under a scare right well; he made that dodge just like a mud-turtle drops offen a log when a big steamboat comes tearin a-past.

"As he passed ole man Burns's, Sicily hailed him to ask if he met anybody goin up the road in a sorta hurry. The poor devil thought that perhaps he might; weren't sure but he had seed a dreadful forewarnin, or a ghost, or ole Beelzebub, or the Tariff. Takin all things together, however, in the little time spared to him for reflection, it musta been a crazy, long-legged, shakin Quaker fleein from the wrath to come on a black-and-white spotted hoss, a-whippin him with a big brush . . . and he had a white beard which come from just under his eyes down to the pommel of the saddle, and then forked and went to his knees, and from there dropped in bunches big as a crow's nest to the ground . . . and Clapshaw heerd a sound like onto the rushin of mighty waters, and he were pow'fully exercised 'bout it anyhow. Well, I guess he were, and so werè his fat hoss, and so were ole Blacky, and more so by a durned sight were me myself.

"After Clapshaw composed hisself, he writ out his fool notions for Sicily: that it were a new steam invention to spread the Catholic doctrine and tote the Pope's bulls to pasture in distant lands—made outen sheet iron, injun rubber, tanned leather, ice cream, and fat pine—and that the hoss's tail were made outen wire red-hot at the point, and a stream of sparks as long as the steerin-oar of a flatboat follered there-

after; and, takin it all together, it weren't a safe thing to meet in a lane of a dark night; and he thought he had a call over the mountain to another circuit; that chickens weren't as plenty over there, but then he were a self-denyin man.

"Now, George, all this beard and spotted hoss and steam and fire and snow and wire tails were durned-scared, circuit rider's humbug. It all come outen my paunch, without any vomitin or coaxin; and if it hadn't, I'd a-done been busted into more scraps nor there's eggs in a big catfish.

"'Hole hit down, Mister Lovingood! Hole hit down!' Now weren't that just the durndest unreasonable request ever a woman made of man? She might just as well asked me to swaller my hoss, and then skin the cat on a cobweb. She's pow'ful on doctorin, though; I'll swear to that."

"Why, Sut?"

"Cause she cured my puppy-love with one dose, durn her! George, am sody *poison*?"

"No. Why?"

"I sorta 'spected it were; and I set in and ate yarbs and grass and roots till I'se punched out like onto a ole cow; my whole swaller and paunch am tanned hard as sole leather. I asks rot-gut no odds now. Here's a drink to the durndest fool in the world—just me!" And the bottom of Sut's flask flashed in the sunlight.

## SICILY BURNS'S WEDDING

“Hey, Ge-orge!” rang among the mountain slopes. And looking up to my left, I saw Sut tearing along down a steep point, heading me off in a long kangaroo lope, holding his flask high above his head and hat in hand. He brought up near me, banteringly shaking the half-full “tickler” within an inch of my face.

“Where am you goin? Take a suck, hoss? This-here truck’s *ole*. I ketched it myself, hot this mornin from the still worm. Nary durned bit of strychnine in it—I put that-there piece of burnt, dried peach in myself to give it color—better nor ole Bullen’s plan: he puts in tan ooze in what he sells and, when that ain’t handy, he uses the red water outen a pond just

below his barn. Makes a pow'ful natural color, but don't help the taste much. Then he corrects that with red pepper. It's an awful mixture, that whiskey ole Bullen makes. No wonder he seed 'Hell-serpents.' He's poisoned nigh onto three-quarters of the b'lievin portion of his congregation with it, and t'other quarter he's set into rough stealin and cussin. If his stillhouse don't burn down or he peg out hisself, the neighborhood am ruinated a-past salvation. Ain't he the durndest sample of a parson you ever seed anyhow?

"Say, George, do you see these-here well-poles what I uses for legs? You says you sees 'em, does you?"

"Yes."

"Very well. I passed 'em a-past each other t'other day right purt. I put one out ahead just so, and then t'other 'bout nine feet ahead of it agin just so, and then kep' on a-doin it. I'll just give you leave to go to the devil half hamon, if I didn't make fewer tracks to the mile—and more to the minute—than were ever made by any human man-body since Bark Wilson beat the saw log from the top of the Frog Mountain into the Oconee River, and dove and dodged it at last. I has allers looked onto that performance of Bark's as unequalled in history—allers givin way to Dad's hornet race, however.

"George, every livin thing has its point; a point of some sort. Ole Bullen's point is a durned first-rate, three-bladed, double-barrelled, waterproof hypocrisy, and a never-tirin appetite for bald face.

"Sicily Burns's point am to drive menfolks plumb crazy, and then bring 'em to agin. Give 'em a real

Orleans fever in five minutes, and then in five minutes more give 'em a Florida ague. Durn her, she's down on her heels flat-footed now.

"Dad's point is to be king of all durned fools ever since the day of that feller what cribbed up so much corn down in Egypt long time ago—he run outen his coat, you minds. The Bible tells us who were the strongest man—who were the best man—who were the meekest man—and who the wisest man—but leaves you to guess who were the biggest fool. Well, any man what couldn't guess after readin that-there scrimmage with a woman 'bout the coat, ain't sense enough to run into the house if it were rainin dead cats, that's all.

"Mam's point am in kitchen insects, bakin hoecake, boilin greens, and runnin bare-legged.

"My point am in takin aboard big scares, and then beatin anybody's hoss or scared dog a-runnin from under 'em agin. I used to think my point and Dad's were just the same—sulky, unmixed, king durned fool—but when he acted hoss and mistook hossflies for hornets, I lost heart. Never mind, when I gits his experience, I may be king fool. But yet, great golly, he gets from bad to worse monstrous fast!

"Now if a feller happens to know what his point am, he kin allers git along, somehow, provided he don't swear away his liberty to a temp'rance society, live too far from a stillhouse and too nigh a church or a jail. Them's my sentiments on points. And here's my sentiments onto folks.

"Men were made a-purpose just to eat, drink, and

for stayin awake in the early part of the nights; and women were made to cook the vittles, mix the spirits, and help the men do the stayin awake. That's all, and nothin more, unless it's for the women to raise the devil atwixt meals and knit socks atwixt drams, and the men to play short cards, swap hosses with fools, and fight for exercise at odd spells. George, you don't understand life scarcely at all. Got a heap to learn, a heap.

"But 'bout my swappin my legs so fast—these-here very pair of legs. I had got about a fox squirrel-skinful of boiled corn juice packed under my shirt, and under my hide too I might as well add, and were aimin for Bill Carr's on foot. When I got in sight of ole man Burns's, I seed nigh onto fifty hosses and mules hitched to the fence. Durnation! I just then thought of it. 'T were Sicily's wedding day! She married ole Clapshaw, the circuit rider. The very feller whose faith give out when he met me sendin soda all over creation.

"Circuit riders am suggestive things to me. They preaches agin me, and I has no chance to preach back at them. If I could, I'd make the institution behave itself better nor it does. They has some wonderful points, George. There am two things nobody ever seed: one am a dead mule, and t'other is a circuit rider's grave. Cause why: the he-mules all turn into ole field schoolmasters, and the she-ones into strong-minded women; and then when their time comes, they dies sorta like other folks. And the circuit riders ride until they marry. If they marries money, they turns

into store-keepers, swaps hosses, and stays away of collection Sundays. Them what marries, and by some awful mistake *misses the money*, just turns into politicians, sells oil well stock, and dies sorta in the human way, too.

“But ’bout the wedding. Ole Burns had a big black-and-white bull, with a ring in his snout and the rope tied up round his horns. They rid him to mill and such-like with a saddle made outen two dogwood forks and two clapboards covered with a ole piece of carpet; rope girth; and rope stirrups with a loop in it for the foot. Ole Sock, as they called the bull, had just got back from mill and were turned into the yard, saddle and all, to solace hisself a-pickin grass.

“I were sloungin round the outside of the house, for they hadn’t had the manners to ask me in when they set down to dinner. I were pow’fully hurt ’bout it and happened to think—‘SODA’! So I set in a-watchin for a chance to do somethin. I first thought I’d shave ole Clapshaw’s hoss’s tail, go to the stable and shave Sicily’s mare’s tail, and ketch ole Burns out and shave his tail too. While I were a-studyin ’bout this, ole Sock were a-nosin round and come up onto a big basket what held a little shattered corn. He dipped in his head to git it, and I slipped up and jerked the handle over his horns.

“Now, George, if you knows the nature of a cow brute, they is the durndest fools among all the beasts (except the Lovingoods) when they gits into tribulation. They knows nothin but to shut their eyes, beller, and back, and keep a-backin. Well, when ole Sock

raised his head and found hisself in darkness, he just twisted up his tail, snorted the shattered corn outen the basket, and made a tremendous lunge agin the house.

“I heerd the pictures a-hangin agin the wall on the inside a-fallin. He fetched a deep, loud, rusty beller—might been heerd a mile—and then set into a unendin system of backin. A big crawfish with a hungry coon a-reachin for him were just nowhere. First agin one thing, then over another, and at last agin the bee-bench—knockin it and a dozen stands of bees head over heels—and then stompin back’ards thru the mess.

“It ain’t much worthwhile to tell what the bees did, or how soon they set into doin it. They am pow’ful quick-tempered little critters, anyhow. The air were dark with ’em and Sock were covered all over from snout to tail, so close’t you couldn’t a-set down a grain of wheat for bees, and they were a-fightin one another in the air for a place on the bull.

“The house stood on sideling ground, and the back door were even with it. So Sock happen to hit it plumb—just backed into the house under ’bout two hundred and fifty pounds of steam, bawlin awful, and every snort he fetched he snorted away a quart of bees offen his sweaty snout. He were the leader of the biggest and the maddest army of bees in the world. There were at least five solid bushels of ’em. They had filled the basket, and had lodged onto his tail ten-deep until it were as thick as a wagon tongue. He had it stuck straight up into the air, and it looked exactly like a



dead pine covered with ivy. I think he were the hottest and worst-hurtin bull then livin. His temper, too, seemed to be pow'fully frustrated. Of *all* the durned times and carryings-on you *ever* heerd tell on were there and thereabouts.

“He come tail-first agin the ole two-story Dutch clock and fetched it . . . bustin its runnin gear outen it, the little wheels a-trundlin over the floor and the bees even chasin 'em. Next pass he fetched up agin the foot of a big, double-engined bedstead, rearin it on end and punchin one of the posts through a glass window. The next tail-first expedition were made aginst the catty-cornered cupboard, outen which he made a perfect momox. First he upset it—smashin in the glass doors—and then just set in and stomped everything on the shelves into giblets a-tryin to back further in that direction and to git the bees offen his legs.

“Pickle crocks, preserves jars, vinegar jugs, seed bags, herb bunches, paregoric bottles, egg baskets, and delf ware—all mixed damn promiscuously, and not worth the sortin by a dollar and a half. Next he got afar back across't the room, agin the board partition. He went thru it like it had been paper, takin with him about six foot square of it in splinters and broken boards into the next room—where they were eatin dinner—and right here the fightin become general, and the dancin, squawkin, cussin, and dodgin begun.

“Clapshaw's ole Mam were as deaf as a dog iron and set at the end of the table, next to where ole Sock

busted through the wall. Tail-first he come agin her chair, a-histin her and it onto the table. Now the smashin of delf and the mixin of vittles begun. They had set several tables together to make it long enough. So Sock just rolled 'em up a-top of one another. And there set ole Missis Clapshaw a-straddle of the top of the pile, a-fightin bees like a mad windmill with her calico cap in one hand for a weapon and a cracked frame in t'other; and a-kickin and a-spurrin like she were ridin a lazy hoss after the doctor; and a-screamin 'Rape,' 'Fire,' and 'Murder' as fast as she could name 'em over.

"Taters, cabbage, meat, soup, beans, sop, dumplins, and the truck what you wallers 'em in . . . milk, plates, pies, puddins, and every durn fixin you could think of in a week were there, mixed and mashed like it had been thru a threshin-machine.

"Ole Sock still kept a-backin, and backed the whole pile—ole woman and all, also some chairs—outen the front door and down seven steps into the lane . . . and then, by golly, turned a fifteen-hundred-pound somersault hissself after 'em, lit a-top of the mixed-up mess flat of his back, and then kicked hissself onto his feet agin.

"About the time ole Sock rose, ole man Burns—you know how fat and stumpy and cross-grained he is, anyhow—made a vig'rous, mad snatch at the basket and got a savin hold onto it, but couldn't let go quick enough; for ole Sock just snorted, bawled, and histed the ole cuss heels-first up into the air, and he lit on the bull's back and had the basket in his hand.

“Just as soon as ole Sock got the use of his eyes he tore off down the lane to outrun the bees, so durned fast that ole Burns were feared to try to git off. So he just socked his feet into the rope loops, and then commenced the durndest bull-ride ever mortal man undertook. Sock run atwixt the hitched critters and the rail-fence, ole Burns first fightin him over the head with the basket to stop him and then fightin the bees with it. I’ll just be durned if I didn’t think he had four or five baskets, it were in so many places at once’t. Well, Burns, basket, bull, and bees scared every durned hoss and mule loose from that fence—bees onto all of ’em . . . bees, by golly, everywhere! Most of ’em critters, too, took a fence rail along fastened to the bridle reins.

“Now I’ll just give you leave to kiss my sister Sal till she squeals if ever such a sight were seed or such noises heerd as filled up that long lane. A heavy cloud of dust, like a hurricane had been blowin, hid all the hosses; and away above it you could see tails and ends of fence-rails a-flyin about. Now and then a pair of bright hind shoes would flash in the sun like two sparks, and away ahead were the basket a-circlin round and about at random. Brayin, nickerin, the bellerin of the bull, clatterin of runnin hooves, and a monstrous rushin sound made up the noise. Lively times in that lane just then, weren’t there?

“I swear ole Burns kin beat any man on top of the earth a-fightin bees with a basket. Just set him a-straddle of a mad bull, and let there be bees enough to

excite the ole man, and the man what beats him kin break me.

“Hosses and mules were took up all over the county, and some were forever lost. You couldn’t go any course in a circle of a mile and not find buckles, stirrups, straps, saddle blankets, or somethin belongin to a saddle hoss.

“Now don’t forgit that about that Burns house there were a good time bein had generally. Fellers and gals loped outen windows . . . they rolled outen the doors in bunches . . . they clomb the chimneys . . . they darted under the house, just to dart out agin . . . they took to the thicket . . . they rolled in the wheatfield, lay down in the creek, did everything but stand still. Some made a straight run *for* home, and some as straight a run *from* home. Liveliest folks I ever did see.

“Clapshaw crawled under a straw pile in the barn and set into prayin—you could a-heerd him a mile—somethin ’bout the plagues of Egypt and the pains of the second death. I tell you now: he lumbered!

“Sicily: she squatted in the cold spring up to her ears and turned a milk crock over her head, while she were a-drownin a mess of bees under her coats.

“I went to her, and says I: ‘You has got another new sensation, ain’t you?’

“Says she: ‘Shet yer mouth, you cussed fool!’

“Says I: ‘Powerful searchin feelin bees gives a body, don’t they?’

“‘Oh, lordy, lordy, Sut! These yere ’bominable insects is jis’ burnin me up!’

“ ‘Give ’em a mess of SODA,’ says I. ‘That’ll cool ’em off and scare the last durned one offen the place.’

“She lifted the crock so she could flash her eyes at me, and said ‘You go to hell!’ *just as plain.*

“I thought, takin all things together, that p’raps I might as well put the mountain atwixt me and that plantation, and I did it.

“There weren’t a woman or a gal at that weddin but what their frocks and stockins were too tight for a week. Bees am worse on women than men, anyhow. They have a fairer chance at ’em. Next day I passed ole Hawley’s, and his gal Betts were sittin in the porch with a white handkerchief tied round her jaws. Her face were as red as a beet, and her eyebrows hung way over heavy.

“Says I: ‘Had a fine time at the weddin, didn’t you?’

“ ‘You mus’ be a durned fool,’ were every word she said.

“I hadn’t gone a hundred yards until I met Missis Brady, her hands fat and her ankles swelled until they shined. Says she: ‘Whar you gwine, Sut?’

“ ‘Bee huntin,’ says I.

“ ‘You jis’ say bees agin, you infunl gallinipper, and I’ll scab yer head wif a rock.’

“Now ain’t it strange how tetchus they am on the subject of bees?

“Of all the durned misfortunate weddins ever since ole Adam married that heifer—what were so fond of talkin to snakes and eatin apples—down to now, that one of Sicily’s and Clapshaw’s were the worst one for

noise, disappointment, scare, breakin things, hurtin, trouble, vexation of spirit, and general swellin. Why, George, her and him couldn't sleep together for nigh onto a week on account of the doins of them-there hot-footed, vengeful, 'bominable little insects. They never will gee together: got too bad a start, mind what I tell you.

"You ain't time now to hear how ole Burns finished his bull-ride, and how I come to do that lofty, topliftical specimen of fast runnin. I'll tell you all that some other time. If any of 'em asks after me, tell 'em that I'm over in Fannin on my way to Dahlonega. They is huntin me to kill me I is feared.

"It am an awful thing, George, to be a natural-born durned fool. You'se never experienced it personally, have you? It's made pow'fully agin our family—and all owin to Dad. I oughta bust my head open agin a bluff of rocks; and just would do it if I weren't a cussed coward. All my earthly 'pendence is in these-here legs—d'you see 'em? If they don't fail, I may turn human some day—that is, sorta human—enough to be a Squire or School Commissioner. If I were just as smart as I am mean and ornery, I'd be President of a wildcat bank in less'n a week.

"Is spirits plenty over with you?"

## OLD BURNS'S BULL-RIDE

Well now, George, while you am waitin for your chain carriers, I'll tell you how old Burns finished that unspeakable bull ride and how I won my race agin all his sons, their hounds, and the neighborhood generally.

Well, after he got outen the lane, they struck a piece of timber land and there he lost his basket. Then he betook hisself to unwindin the rope offen the bull's horns and wrapped it round his left hand.

Now as it happens, Squire Mills has a bull too—a monstrous fightin, cross, ole cuss what has the Frog Mountain for his circuit this year. He just goes where he durn please, and thinks he is the best man in the range. He happened to be browsin about in this piece

of woods and, hearin ole Sock a-bellerin, took it for a challenge. So he raked up some dirt with his hoof and sprinkled it over his back. Then he dug some outen a bank with his horns and smelt of it. Then he took a twist or two into his tail and histed it, and felt hissself then ready for active service.

Ole Sock and his rider come in sight a-tearin, and they smelt each other. Both were dead game and mad, so a big fight were morally durned certain. As soon as old Burns seed t'other bull, he understood exactly what were a-comin and when. So he leaned hissself back onto the rope pow'ful, till he pulled the stirrup loops tight onto his feet and hauled ole Sock's nose and lip 'way up atween his eyes by the ring—sorta like bustin a rawhide outen a rat with a horn hook. Sock's face looked like it were skinned or a dead beef's head on a live bull's body. He were the worst-lookin cow brute in the face you ever seed, and it made his bellerin sound like he had the rattles. But, in spite of all this, he steamed straight ahead for the enemy. He didn't care a durn for anything since his intercourse with the bees and his mystification in the basket.

Ole Burns commenced snatchin brush from the trees—first one side and then t'other—as he passed, and then wearin 'em out over the inside of ole Sock's histed lip, square down atwixt his horns. As fast as he wore 'em out, he would snatch for more; he's just the best man for usin baskets or brush in an emergency I ever seed. How he'd thrive in a bad skeeter country! They'd never git in suckin distance of him. But it were all hard thrashin wasted: the bellerin-machines associ-



ated, and they set their heads together like two drunk locomotives would. When they hit, down come their tails; but they histed 'em agin in a moment and a-shakin 'em at the points like they wanted to git the dust outen the hair.

The shock fetched ole Burns outen the dogwood saddle and onto the neck; but he crawfished back durned quick, and never stopped his thrashin of 'em over their heads and eyes for one moment. The next time they mixed, they come by guess—with their eyes shut—for fear of that perpetual-motion brush. It just rained brush, well-mixed with some awful offhand cussin.

The Mills bull's a mighty smart critter to be only a cow beast, and he 'preciated exactly ole Burns's power with a handful of brush. So, while ole Sock were a-goin thru a grand charge blind, he took a circumbendibus round and give him Marcy's game on ole Fuss and Feathers: a bustin-hot fire in the rear. He just come in atween his hind legs and buried his head and horns there under a full run . . . a-histin Sock's stern two foot clear of the earth . . . and right then down come Sock's tail with a swish and he were took along wheelbarrow-fashion onto his forelegs, pow'ful agin his will and comfort, with the smellin end of his head drawed higher nor ever to'ards his curl . . . the brush-machine in full blast and gittin faster and harder, and ole Burns a-snatchin of more. The bellerin and cussin were mixed now nigh onto as equal as a careful man mixes whiskey and water, and the mixture made a most doleful sound. If you'd a-heerd it at half

a mile, you would a-knowed there were a heap of hurtin and wrath a-goin on where it come from.

Ole Sock were hurried on in this unnatural and unmannerly manner over a fallen pine tree, and there ole Mills stopped—I s'pose to see the effect of his new plan of fightin—and there he did a durned fool thing: for, if he had a-kept that-there head of his'n in close't communion with ole Sock's stern, he would been bound to spoke the word afore long. But as it were, it give Sock time to turn round with 'cumulated wrath—the natural bull-fightin way.

Ole Mills had a wholesome fear of the steam brush-mill what Sock toted on his upper deck. So he come it blind agin. And the next time they met they missed, and the horn run under ole Burns's leg and atwixt the rope girth and ole Sock's hide. Mills give a twist and busted the girth . . . swung that misfortunate ole man and the saddle round, and then lent 'em a big hist. Up they went, saddle first, and it hung onto the snag limb of a dead pine just high enough to let ole Burns's hands sorta tetch ground. There he hung by the heels.

He set in now and cussed in real earnest. He mixed in a little prayin with it now and then, for there were a streak of scare in his mad as he found hissself hung hog-fashion and a pair of bulls a-fightin round him. His voice were changed so you wouldn't a-knowed him by it; it sounded like he were down in a well or had a locust in his throat. He bemoaned his condition pow'ful: cussed Sicily as the first cause and Clapshaw as the second cause; and then went way back twenty-

five years and cussed hisself for ever marryin at all, as that were the beginnin of it; talked dreadful to hear 'bout shotguns, hickory clubs, and the Devil's brimstone works—a-mentionin my name often in these last remarks. I tell you, it were tremendously awful to listen to, comin from a man of family and property hung up by the heels where two dreadful ole bulls were at war.

One got a-runnin onto t'other and backed in agin the ole man pow'ful fast. They pushed him as far as the rope let 'em; and to make it worse, he—a durned ole fool—grabbed a death-hold onto the tail and held on as long as he could stand it for his ankles. At last he let go and away he swung—tick, tick—like a durned ole clock what were behind time and were a-tryin to ketch up agin—and him a-snatchin at the weeds and grass a fetchin handful every swing . . . the prayin and cussin never slackin off for anything. I tell you, he has lots of sand in his gizzard; he is the best pluck I ever seed.

Well, there they fought—round and round—tearin up the earth and roots and bull meat . . . he a-watchin 'em as well as he could with his head down. Directly they come agin from ahind, slather agin the ole feller, and carried him for'ard this time—and not clock-fashion sidewise. Just as soon as the stern of the Mills bull tetched Burns, he went for tail-hold agin. And, by golly, he held it this time until his shoes come off and he fell smack atop of Mills—face to the tail. He took hisself good handhold into each of the flanks and locked his legs round the critter's neck. Oh, durn

him! He is just as ready and quick as a cat. His 'rangements were made to stay there all night; and, for fear of accidents, he took a good bill-hold on the tail with his teeth.

Ole Mills now didn't begin to understand what were atop of him. It were somethin, certain, what had both claws and teeth and—*painter* flashed onto his mind with all the force the bill-hold onto his tail could give it. Dreadful, dreadful thought! His pluck wilted, and he just turned tail to the battleground and went aimin for North Caliney . . . ole Sock a-trottin after him sorta careless-like.

Now the ticklin onto Mills' flanks, the chokin round his neck, and the steel trap sprung onto his tail did discomfort him pow'ful. He just mizzled. Every few jumps he'd give a hurried, hurtin short beller and kick both heels as high as he could; but ole Burns were there, still there. By golly, golly! He were *growed* there.

Mills struck the river at a point where the bluff were sixty-feet high above water thirty-foot deep. Durned if ever he thought even of measurin it, but just loped over head-down . . . and of course the old man were goin tail-down. Just as soon as he seed the water under him, quick as a cat agin *he set in to climbin the tail* overhanded. But it weren't any use, George, for they both went outen sight, just bustin the river plumb open. The last part goin under were one of Burns's hands a-hunting round for more tail to climb. I never seed such waves in the Oconee afore or since, and the

bluff were wet to the top, and drops of water were fallin off the cedars on its brow.

Thinks I: "Great Jemimy! Will they never come up?"

After a long time, up popped the ole man—already a-headin for this shore—and away yonder the bull riz horns first, and he aimed for t'other bank. They both crawled out, lay down in the sand, and eyed each other across't the river. If either of 'em horned up a morsel of dirt, I didn't see 'em do it; but just took it out in restin, watchin each other, and vengeful thoughts. That man and that bull were mortal enemies for life.

His sons found ole Burns and hauled him home onto a sled covered with straw and a bed-quilt. Mill's bull sought hisself another circuit and become as moral as a draft steer. Ole Sock become more depraved and run wild in the mountains. And I is just about as I were—the durndest fool in the mess.

I just heerd from ole Burns yesterday. He am powerful bad off. Made his will: a-cuttin off ole Sock with a shillin; leavin Sicily and me his maledictions—what am they anyhow?—and fifty dollars in trust in ole Bullen's hands for the encompassment of my death. To ole Clapshaw he's left fifteen feet of new hemp rope; and to his wife, and ole Missis Clapshaw, a dollar to buy arsenic.

Then, thinkin the business of this world done, he just went plumb crazy—crazy as a bedbug in July. Talks nothin but nonsense: says the house is upside down; hears bees a-hummin of nights and sees whole

droves of bulls a-fightin all day ; and that I is a-stand-in atop of the bureau—with a basket of bees—a-flingin handfuls at his head every time he looks t'other way. Just turned damn fool, that's all.

All the old quilts of women and the old soggy men round there visits him. The women fans him, fixes the bed clothes, and boils yarbs for him ; and the men oils his bruises and poultices his body. Ole Missis Burns is mad as a hornet 'bout that arsenic clause in his will and won't come a-nigh him ; says she has plenty of swellins of her own to swage and ain't time to waste on no durned ole ungrateful, murderin fool. And strange to tell, George, she sticks to me. Says I am the best of the lot ; says, too, that I ain't one half as durned a fool as ole Burns and ten times more of a Christian than Clapshaw. Wonder if it kin be possible that woman is right? One thing am certain : she am my friend.

Well, the verdict of the neighborhood were that I were the cause of all the whole thing. Greater injustice were never done, for all that I did in the world were just to help ole Sock git a few grains of shattered corn by liftin the basket over his horns ; and when I did it, the fuss weren't begun at all. After'ards I did nothin but stand clear of danger, and watch things happen. When they took the vote on who were the cause, every durned one of 'em voted "Sut," except Sicily and her Mam : Sicily voted "bull and bees" ; her Mam voted "Clapshaw."

Well, they all got together—headed by Burns's two fox-huntin sons—and took my case in hand. The first

thing I knowed they were onto my trail: hosses, hounds, horns, muskets, shotguns, cur dogs, and all. Now my superfine runnin began.

After a long time, I seed from a high point that one of the hounds—down the mountain below me—were a great way ahead of everything else and would soon come up with the slack of my britches, so I waited for him. When he bulged for my throat, I reached for his'n, flung him down, slit a hole in each ear and run his hind legs thru 'em over the neck, give him some comfortin advice with a keen hickory and laid him down onto my trail—he did look powerful sorry for what he had done—and then I went to travellin agin.

When the balance of the dogs come up, human-like they all pitched into the poor helpless devil; and, when the two-legged dogs come up, he were apast prayin for at least half a mile.

I beat 'em so bad, my trail got too cold to foller. That's what I *calls* runnin. I feels, though, George, like my time most come. Fifty dollars am a heap of money, and the most of the women am agin me: that's the dangerous part of it.

I'se a goner, I expect, and I don't just care a durn. I'm no count, nohow. Just look at me! Did you ever see such a sample of a human afore? I feels like I'd be glad *to be* dead, only I'se feared of the dyin. I don't care for hereafter, for it's unpossible for me to have ary a soul. Who ever seed a soul in just such a rack heap of bones and rags as this? I'se nothin but some newfangled sort of beast . . . a sorta cross atween

a crazy ole monkey and a durned, wore-out hominy mill. I is one of Dad's exploits at makin cussed, fool inventions, and come afore my time. I blames him for all of it, allers a-tryin to be king fool. He has a heap to account for, George—a heap.



PART FOUR

**SUT SETS  
CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS  
RIGHT**



## THE WIDOW McCLOUD'S MARE

There come to this country once't a cussed, sneakin-lookin reptile, name Stilyards. He were hatched in a crack—in the frosty rocks where nutmegs am made outen maple, and where women paints clock-faces and points shoe-pegs, and the men invents rat-traps, man-traps, and new-fangled doctrines for the aid of the Devil. In fact, it am his garden, where he can grow what won't sprout anywhere else.

Well, this critter looked like a cross atween a black snake and a fireman's ladder. He were eighteen and a half hands high and modelled like onto a shingle maker's shavin hoss, and were as yaller as a water dog with the janders. His eyes were like onto a coon's,

and his foot were the biggest chunk of meat and knotty bones I ever seed to have no guts into it. Now if he had one gift what would make you take to him, I never seed it; and if he ever did a good or a straight-ahead thing, I never heerd of it. He could p'raps be scared into actin right for a minute or two at a time, but it wouldn't last.

He come among us a ole field schoolmaster. Soon shed that shell and come out as oily, slippery a lawyer as ever took a fee. Why, he'd a-held his own in a pond full of eels, and a-swallowed the last durn one of 'em, and then set the pond to turnin a shoe-peg mill. Well, he practiced on all the misfortunate devils round that circuit till he got sassy, got niggers, got rich, got forty maulings for his nastiness. And, to put a cap sheaf onto his stack of rascality, got religion and got to Congress.

The first thing he did there were to proffer to tend the Capital grounds in onions and beans on shares; and to sell the statue of Columbus to a tenpin alley for a sign, and the she-injun with him to send back the balls. He stole the Roman sword offen the stone picture of War there and fetched it to his wife for a meat-chopper. He practiced law onto you for anything you had, from a handful of chestnuts to a plantation. To tell it all in a minute, when he dies he'll make the fastest trip to the center of soot, sorrow, and smoke on record, not even exceptin ole Iscariot's fast time.

Well, a misfortunate devil happened to steal a hoss by accident, got Stilyards to defend him, got into the penitentiary, and Stilyards got all he had—a half-hound dog and an ole eight-day Yankee clock—for

sendin him there. He took a big, young mare from a widder name McCloud for losin a land case.

So he walked out into that neighborhood to gather up and tote home his fees, and I met up with him. He had the clock tied onto his back peddler-fashion, leadin the mare in one hand and the dog by a rope with t'other. The dog were enterprisin and led too fast—the mare were sulky and led too slow. The clock were heavy and the day hot. He were havin of a good time generally with his fees, his sweat, and his mean thoughts. So he commenced tryin to hire me to help him to town for a gill of whiskey.

Now who the Devil ever heerd tell of a gill of whiskey in these parts afore? Why, it sounded sort of like an inch of cordwood or an ounce of corn shucks. It insulted me. So I set in to fix a way to put a gill or so of personal discomfort under his shirt, and I did it.

Says I: "You might save that whiskey if you does as I tells you. Just you git atop and outside that she-hoss there. Tie that-there dog's rope round her neck, set the time-mill up onto her back ahind you, then tie the rope round yerself. That makes her tote the furniture, tote you, and lead your valuable dog while you governs the movement with a good hickory and them bridle strings, don't you see?"

Stilyards pouched out his mouth, nodded his head five or six times—a-bendin but one joint 'bout the middle of that long yaller neck of his'n—and said: "Yas, a good suggistshun, Mister Lovingood."

I set in to help him fix things. I peeled lots of good bark, set the clock on end—back to back with Stil-

yards onto the mare's bare coupling—and then tied the bark round his carcass like I meant him and the clock to stick together as long as it run or he lived, and it come durned nigh doin it.

Stilyards said he thought the thing would work, *and so did I*. By golly, I seed the reddish-brown fire a-playin in the mare's eyes and the quick twitchin in her flank, both of what I knowed and understood to mean that she'd make awful things happen purty durned soon. The sharp point of Stilyards' tail-bone, as well as the clock legs, were a-makin lively suggestions to a devil in her as big as a yearling. All were ready for the show to begin.

“You git up, you pesky critter,” said Stilyards, a-making his heels meet and crack under her belly.

Well, she did “git up” right then and there and stayed up long enough to light twenty foot further away in a broad, tremblin squat, her tail hid atween her thighs, her ears a-dancing a-past each other like scissors a-cuttin.

The jolt of the lightin set the clock to strikin. Bang-zee-bang zee! Whang-zee! The mare listened pow'ful attentive to the first three licks. They seemed to go through and through her as quick as quicksilver would git through a sifter. She waited for no more, but just give her whole soul up to the one job of runnin from under that infernal Yankee and his hive of bumblebees, rattlesnakes, and other awful hurtin things as she took the clock to be. I knows how she felt. I'se been in the same boat five hundred times, and durn

my carcass if she didn't carry out my ideas of gittin out of trouble first-rate.

Every jump the mare made, she jerked that misfortunate dog six foot upward and thirty foot onward. Sometimes he lit on his stern, sometimes on his snout, then onto both ends at once. He changed sides every other lunge, clear over Stilyards and his hour-mill too. He said "O! Outch!" every time he lit, in hound talk loud enough to scare the Devil. The road were sprinkled worm-fence fashion, like onto a drunken man a-totin a leaky jug.

The durned ole clock, it got excited too and lost control of itself and forgot to stop, but just scizzed and whanged away straight along; the mare a-hearin it all and a-believin the sound to be comin nigher to her innards every pop.

She thought, too, that four hundred black and tan hound dogs were 'compassin her eternal ruin. She seed them above her, below her—behind her, afore her—on both sides of her—anywhere, everywhere—nothin but hound dogs. And so she just tried to run outen her sorrel hide. I seed her two hind shoes shinin way up in the air like two new moons. I knowed she were a-mixin in some high-pressure, vicious kickin with a heap of as earnest and fast runnin as hosses ever indulges in.

"Wo yeow now!" I heerd this sprinkled in now and then with the yowls of the dog and the whangin of the clock, and all of it out-done with mighty noise of clatterin hoofs and crashin brush.

Stilyards sat humped up, his puddin foots locked

under the scared critter's belly and his paws wove into her mane double-twilled. I expect she thought the Devil were a-huggin her, and she were durned near right.

Thinks I: "Ole feller, *if* you gain *this* suit, you may ask Satan, when you sees him, for a pair of licenses to practice at his court. He'll sign 'em, sure."

I cut across't the ridge what the road wound round and got where I could see them a-comin, sorta to'ards me again. The mare were stretched out straight as a string, and so were Stilyards. He were roostin pow'ful low onto her withers, his long arms locked round her neck, his big feet a-flyin about sorta limber-like in the air each side of her tail.

The dog must have been nigh onto killed dead, for both his hind legs were gone plump up to his coupling and a string of innards comin outen the hole his legs had left were a-flutterin after him like a bolt of grey ribbon, slappin agin the saplings and stumps and gettin longer every slap. His paunch were a-bobbin up and down about a foot ahind where the point of his tail used to be. If he yowled any now, I didn't hear it.

That clock—the cussed, mischief-making machine, the cause of all this unearthly noise, trouble, and vexation of spirit—were still onto ole Stilyards' back and a-mauling away as if it were in the straight line of household duty. The bark were a-holdin its hold pow'ful well, considerin the strain.

They met a ole bald-headed, thick-set feller a-comin from the mill, a-ridin on a grist of meal,



and it on a blaze-face hoss with burrs in his tail. The feller were totin a keg of strained honey in his lap, and a woman behind him with a spinnin wheel onto her hip. The mare run square into this milling expedition. Just as she did it, Stilyards hollered: "Yeow, cut the bar—" He never added the "k" to that word, for something happened just then and thereabouts. . . .

The bald-headed man, that unlucky ole cuss, lit twenty foot out in the woods. He never looked back, but set his trampers to work and distributed himself somewhere toward the Black Oak Ridge.

The woman hung by one foot in the fork of a blackjack and, a-holdin to a dogwood limb with her hands, she hollered sorta spiteful-like: "Split the blackjack or fetch a quilt!" Nothing of the sort was done whilst I were there, as I knows on.

Stilyards were nigh t'other side of the road, flat onto his back, fainted comfortable and quiet as a sick sow in a snowstorm, his arms and legs stretched till he looked like a big letter X. His hat were somewhere and a boot somewhere else. His clothes were in strings, like he'd been shot through a thorn thicket outen a cannon. His nose were a-bleedin just about right to bring him too sometime to'ards the middle of the afternoon. His eyes were shut up and his face were puckered like a wet sheepskin afore a hot fire; he looked sorta like he'd been studyin a deep plan to cheat somebody and had missed.

The dog—that is, what were left of him—were a-lyin bent over the top of a sapling stump, and the

t'other end of his innards were tangled up among the mare's hind legs, and she were stretched out in runnin shape; not hurt a bit, only her neck were broke and a spinnin wheel spoke a-stickin atween her ribs a foot or so deep. Ole bald-face were onto his side, now and then liftin his head and takin a look at the surroundin desolation and sorrow.

The ole time-counter were a-leanin up agin a tree: some bark still round it; the door gone; the face smashed; but still true to what it thought its duty—just bangin away as regular as if it were at home—and I reckon it's at it yet.

There were honey-keg hoops, heads, staves, and spinnin-wheel spokes promiscuously scattered all about, and meal sprinkled over everybody and everything.

Just then a feller what looked like he might be a tract sower or a map agent rid up and took a *big* look all round.

Says he: "Mister, did the lightnin hurt *you*?"

Says I: "Was nor lightnin; a powder keg busted."

The woman in the blackjack hollered at him just then savage as a cat: "Look tuther way, you cussed imperdint hound!"

He had to turn his head to see where the voice come from. He just looked one squint, said "Great Heavens," gave his hoss a awful dust of whip and spurs, and left a-flyin.

I now took the meal-bag, put in the remnant of the dog and sich of the honey as I could scoop up, drawed the bag over Stilyards' head and tied it

tight round his neck in hopes it might help fetch him to sooner, split the blackjack, and left in a lope. I heard the woman squall after me: "Never mind, laigs; *I'll pay you!*" She ain't done it *yet*.

I took the road Stilyards and the mare and his t'other gear had come over so far, and passed a cabin where a ole woman dressed in a pipe and a striped apron were a-standin on the ash hopper—lookin up the road like she were expectin to see somethin soon.

Says she, talkin 'bout as fast as a flutter-mill: "Say you, mister, did you meet anythin uncommon up thar?"

I shook my head.

"Well," says she, jumpin off the hopper and a-shakin the ashes outen her coat-tail and settin her specks back: "Mister, I'se plumb out-done. Thar's somethin pow'ful wicked gwine on. A crazy organ-grinder come a-pas' yere jist a small scrimption slower nur chain lightnin on a hoss wif no tail. His organ were tied onto his back and were a-playin that good tchune 'Sugar in the Gourd' or 'Barbary Allen'—I dunno which—and his monkey were a-dancin 'Hail Columby' all over the road; and its tail were as long as my clothes-line and perfectly bare of hair. This organ-grinder hed no hat on, and one of his boots flew off as he passed yere and lit on the smoke-house. Thar hit is. He must been a pow'ful big man, for hit's like onto a indigo seroon." All this were said without takin one breath.

I told her it were the advance guard of a big cir-

cus proclaimin its comin or the comin of the Millenium, and durned if I knowed which.

She allowed it couldn't be the Millenium, for the organ weren't a-playin hymn-tunes; nor a circus either, for the hoss weren't spotted. But it might be the Devil after a tax-collector, or a missionary on his way to China. It looked ugly enough to be one, and fool enough to be the other. She were pow'fully exercised; she sweat and snorted under it.

Now don't you believe, as soon as Stilyards come to and got outen the bag, he set in and buried the mare so as to hide her! And then, at next court, *indicted me for stealin her* and come durned nigh provin it. Now ain't that the Devil? As for what become of Stilyards, I dunno. If he ain't in Congress, he's gone to Hell.

## PARSON JOHN BULLEN'S LIZARDS

AIT (\$8) DULLARS REW-ARD

'TENSUN BELIEVERS AND KONSTABLES!

KETCH 'IM! KETCH 'IM!

This kash will be pade in korn, ur uther pro-  
juce, to be kolected at ur about nex camp-meetin,  
*ur thararter*, by eny wun what ketches him, fur  
the karkus ove a sartin wun SUT LOVIN-  
GOOD, dead ur alive, ur ailin, an' safely giv  
over tu the purtectin care ove Parson John  
Bullin, ur lef well tied, at Squire Mackjunks,  
fur the raisin ove the devil pussonely, an' per-  
miskusly discumfurtin the wimen very powerful,  
an' skeerin ove folks generly a heap, an' bustin

up a promisin, big warm meetin, an' a makin the wickid larf, an' wus, an' wus, insultin ove the passun orful.

Test, JEHU WETHERO.

Sined by me, JOHN BULLEN, the passun.

\* \* \*

I found written copies of the above highly-intelligible and vindictive proclamation stuck up on every blacksmith shop, doggery, and store door in the Frog Mountain Range. Its blood-thirsty spirit, its style, and, above all, its chirography interested me to the extent of taking one down from a tree for preservation. In a few days, I found Sut in a good crowd in front of Capehart's Doggery and, as he seemed to be about in good tune, I read it to him.

"Yas, George, that-there document am in dead-earnest certain. Them Hardshells over there does want me the worst kind, pow'ful bad. *But*, I expect eight dollars won't fetch me, neither would eight hundred, because there's none of 'em fast enough to ketch me. Neither is their hosses, by the livin jingo! Say, George, much talk 'bout this fuss up where you're been?"

For the sake of a joke I said: "Yes, a great deal."

"Just as I expected, durn 'em. All git drunk and scare their fool selves nigh onto death, and then they lay it onto me—a poor innocent youth, and as sound a believer as they is. Light, light, ole feller, and let that roan of yourn blow a little . . . and I'll explain this cussed misfortunate affair. It has ruined

my character as a pious person in the society round here and is a-spreadin faster nor measles. Whenever you hear any on 'em a-spreadin it, give it the damn lie square, will you? I ain't done nothin to one of 'em. It's true, I did sorta frustrate a few lizards a little, but they ain't members as I knows on.

"You see, last year I went to the big meetin at Rattlesnake Springs, and were a-sittin in a nice, shady place conversin with a friend of mine into the huckleberry thicket—just doin nothin to nobody and makin no fuss—when, the first thing I remembers, I woke up from a trance what I had been knocked into by a four-year-old hickory-stick held in the paw of ole Parson Bullen, durn his alligator hide. He were a-standin a-straddle of me, a-foamin at the mouth, a-chompin his teeth, gesturin with the hickory club—and a-preachin to me so you could a-heerd him a mile about a certain sin generally and my wickedness personally, and mentioning the name of my friend loud enough to be heerd to the meetin house. My poor, innocent friend were done gone and I were glad of it, for I thought he meant to kill me right where I lay, and I didn't want her to see me die."

"Who was she, the friend you speak of, Sut?"

Sut opened his eyes wide. "Who the devil and durnation tole *you* that it were a she?"

"Why, you did, Sut—."

"I *didn't*, durn if I did. Ole Bullen done it, and I'll have to kill him yet, the cussed infernal ole tale-bearer!"

“Well, well, Sut, who was she?”

“None of y-o-u-r b-u-s-i-n-e-s-s, durn your little anxious picture! I *sees you* a-lickin of your lips. I *will* tell you one thing, George. That night a neighbor gal got a all-fired, overhanded stroppin from her mam with a stirrup leather, and ole Parson Bullen had et supper there. What’s worse nor all, that poor, innocent, scared gal had done her level best a-cookin it for him. She begged him—a-tremblin and a-cryin—not to tell on her. He et her cookin, he promised her he’d keep dark—and then went straight and tole her mam. Weren’t that real low-down wolf-mean? The durned, infernal, hypocritical, pot-bellied, scaly-hided, whiskey-wastin, stinkin ole ground-hog! He’da heap better a-stole some *man’s* hoss; I’da thought more of him. But I paid him plumb up for it, and I means to keep a-payin him until one or t’other of our toes points up to the roots of the grass.

“Well, here’s the way I lifted that note of hand. At the next big meetin at Rattlesnake—last week it were—I were on hand as solemn as a ole hat cover on collection day. I had my face drawn out into the shape and proportion of a tailor’s sleeve-board, point down. I had put on the convicted sinner so perfectly that an ole, observin she-pillar of the church said to a ole he-pillar, as I walked up to my bench:

“ ‘Law sakes alive, ef thar ain’t that orful sinner, Sut Lovingood, pierced plumb through! Who’s nex?’ ”



“You see, by golly, George, I *had* to promise the ole tub of soap-grease to come and have myself converted, just to keep him from killin me. And as I knowed it wouldn't interfere with the relation I bore to the stillhouses round there, I didn't care a durn. I just wanted to git *nigh* ole Bullen once't—unsuspected—and this were the best way to do it.

“I took a seat on the side steps of the pulpit, and covered as much of my stretched face as I could with my hands to prove I were in earnest. It took pow'ful—for I heerd a sorta thankful kind of buzzin all over the congregation. Ole Bullen hisself looked down at me, over his ole copper specks, and it said just as plain as a look could say it: ‘You am thar, are you? Durn you, it's well for you that you come.’ I thought sorta different from that. I thought, ‘It woulda been well for *you* if I hadn't a-come,’ but I didn't say it just then.

“There were a monstrous crowd in that grove, for the weather were fine and b'lievers were plenty round about Rattlesnake Springs. Ole Bullen give out, and they sung that hymn, you know:

‘Thar will be mournin, mournin yere and  
mournin thar,  
On that dreadful day to cum.’

“Thinks I: ‘Ole hoss, kin it be possible anybody has told you what's a-goin to happen?’ And then I thought that nobody knowed it but me, and I were comforted.

“He next took hisself a text pow’fully mixed with brimstone and trimmed with blue flames, and then he opened. He commenced onto the sinners. He threatened ’em awful, tried to scare ’em with all the worst varmint he could think of, and after a while he got onto the idea of Hell-serpents, and he dwelt on it some. He told ’em how the ole Hell-serpents would serve ’em if they didn’t repent: how cold they’d crawl over their naked bodies, and how like unto pitch they’d stick to ’em as they crawled; how they’d wrap their tails round their necks choking-close, poke their tongues up their noses, and hiss into their ears. This were the way they were to serve men-folks.

“Then he turned onto the women. Told ’em how they’d coil into their bosoms; and how they *would* crawl down under their frock-strings, no odds how tight they tied em; and how some of the oldest and worst Hell-serpents would crawl up their legs and travel *under* their garters, no odds how tight they tied ’em. And when the two armies of Hell-serpents met, then—

“That last remark *fetched* ’em. Of all the screamin and hollerin and loud cryin I ever heerd begun all at once’t, all over the whole ground, just as he hollered out that word ‘then.’ He kep on a-bellerin, but I got so busy just then that I didn’t listen to him much, for I saw that my time for action had come.

“Now you see, George, I’d catched seven or eight big, pot-bellied lizards, and had ’em in a little, narrow bag what I had made a-purpose. Their tails all

at the bottom, and so crowded for room that they couldn't turn round. So, when he were a-ravin onto his tip-toes and a-poundin the pulpit with his fists—unbeknownst to anybody, I untied my bag of reptiles, put the mouth of it under the bottom of his britches-leg, and set in to pinchin their tails. Quick as gunpowder they all took up his bare leg, makin a noise like squirrels a-climbin a shell-bark hickory.

“He stopped preachin right in the middle of the word ‘Damnation,’ and looked for a moment like he were a-listenin for somethin—sorta like a ole sow does when she hears you a-whistlin for the dogs. The terrific shape of his features stopped the shoutin and screamin; instantly you could hear a cricket chirp. I give a long groan and held my head atwixt my knees. He give hisself some awful open-handed slaps, with first one hand and then t’other, about the place where you cut the best steak outen a beef. Then he’d fetch a vig’rous, rough rub where a hoss tail sprouts; then he’d stomp one foot, then t’other, then both at once’t. Then he run his hand atween his waistband and his shirt, and reached way down and round with it. Then he spread his big legs and give his back a good, rattlin rub agin the pulpit, like a hog scratches hisself agin a stump, leanin to it pow’ful, and twitchin and squirmin all over as if he’d slept in a dog bed, or onto a pissant hill.

“About this time, one of my lizards—scared and hurt by all this poundin and feelin and scratchin—popped out his head from atween the Parson’s shirt

collar and his ole brown neck and were a-surveyin the crowd, when ole Bullen struck at him; just too late, for he'd dodged back agin.

"The hell-deservin, ole rascal's speech now come to him, and says he: 'Pray fur me, brethren and sisteren, for I is a-rasslin wif the great enemy right now!' And his voice were the most pitiful, tremblin thing I ever heerd.

"Some of the women fetched a painter yell, and a young doctor with ramrod legs leaned toward me monstrous-knowin, and says he: 'Clar case of Delicious Tremenjus.'

"I nodded my head, and says I: 'Yas, specially the tremenjuss part, and I'se feared it ain't at its worst.'

"Ole Bullen's eyes were a-stickin out like onto two buckeyes flung agin a mud wall, and he were a-cuttin up more shines nor a cockroach in a hot skillet. Off went the clamhammer coat, and he flung it ahind him like he were a-goin into a fight. He had no jacket to take off, so he unbuttoned his galluses and vig'rously flung the ends back over his head. He fetched his shirt over-handed a durned sight faster nor I got outen my pasted one, and then flung it straight up in the air like he just wanted it to keep on up forever. But it lodged onto a blackjack, and I seed one of my lizards with his tail up a-racin about all over the ole dirty shirt, scared too bad to jump.

"Then ole Bullen give a sorta shake and a stompin kind of twist, and he come outa his britches. He took 'em by the bottom of the legs and swung 'em round

his head a time or two, and then fetched em down *cherall-up!* over the front of the pulpit. You could a-heerd the smash a quarter of a mile! Nigh onto fifteen shortened biscuits; a boiled chicken with its legs crossed; a big, double-bladed knife; a hunk of terbacker; a cob-pipe; some copper ore; lots of broken glass; a cork; a sprinkle of whiskey . . . a squirt; and three lizards flew promiscuously all over that meetin-ground outen the upper end of them big, flax britches.

“One of the smartest of my lizards lit head-first into the bosom of a fat woman—as big as a skinned hoss and nigh onto as ugly—who sat thirty yards off, a-fannin herself with a turkey-tail. Smart to the last, by golly, he immediately commenced runnin down the centre of her breast-bone, and kep on, I expect. She were just bound to faint. And she did it first-rate: flung the turkey-tail up in the air, grabbed the lap of her gown and give it a big histin-and fallin-shake, rolled down the hill, tangled her legs and garters in the top of a huckleberry bush—with her head in the branch—and just lay still. She were interestin, she were, until a serious-lookin, pale-faced woman hung a nankeen ridin-skirt over the huckleberry bush. That were all that were done to’ards bringin her to that I seed.

“Now ole Bullen had nothin left onto him but a pair of heavy, low-quartered shoes; short, woolen socks; and eel-skin garters to keep off the cramp. His scare had drove him plumb crazy, for he felt round in the air above his head like he were huntin

somethin in the dark, and he bellered out: 'Brethren, brethren, take keer of yerselves! The Hell-sarpints *hes got me!*'

"When this come out, you could a-heerd the screams to Halifax. He just spit in his hands and loped over the front of the pulpit *kerdiff!* He lit on top of and right among the most pious part of the congregation. Ole Missis Chinaberry sat with her back to the pulpit, sorta stoopin for'ard. He lit a-straddle of her long neck, a-shuttin her up with a snap—her head atwixt her knees—like shuttin up a jack-knife, and he set into gittin away his level durndest. He went into a heavy, lumberin gallop, like a ole, fat wagon-horse scared at a locomotive. When he jumped a bench, he shook the earth. The bonnets and fans cleared the way and jerked most of the children with 'em, and the rest he scrunched. He opened a perfectly-clear track to the woods, clear of every livin thing. He weighed nigh onto three hundred, had a black stripe down his back like onto a ole bridle rein, and his belly were 'bout the size and color of a beef paunch, and it a-swingin out from side to side; he leaned back from it like a little feller a-totin a big drum at a muster, and I heerd it plumb to where I were. There were cramp-knots on his legs as big as walnuts, and mottled splotches on his shins. And, takin him all over, he reminded of a durned crazy ole elephant possessed of the Devil, reared up on its hind end, and just *gittin* from some immediate danger or tribulation. He did the loudest, and scariest, and fussiest runnin I ever seed to be no faster

nor it were since Dad tried to outrun the hornets.

“Well, he disappeared in the thicket just bustin. And of all the noises you ever heerd were made there on that camp ground: some women screamin—they were the scary ones; some laughin—they were the wicked ones; some cryin—they were the fool ones (sorta my stripe, you know); some tryin to git away with their faces red—they were the modest ones; some lookin after ole Bullen—they were the curious ones; some hangin close’t to their sweethearts—they were the sweet ones; some on their knees with their eyes shut, but facin the way the ole mud-turtle were a-runnin—they were the ’ceitful ones; some doin nothin—they were the waitin ones, and the most dangerous of all of ’em by a durned long sight.

“I took a big scare myself after a few rocks and such-like fruit scattered onto the pulpit nigh onto my head. And as the Lovingoods, durn em! knows nothin but to run when they gits scared, I just put out for the swamp on the creek. As I started, a black bottle of bald-face smashed agin a tree fornenst me, after missin the top of my head ’bout a inch. Some durned-fool professor done this, who had more zeal than sense. For I say that any man who would waste a quart of even mean spirits, for the chance of knockin a poor ornery devil like me down with the bottle, is a bigger fool nor ole Squire MacMullen, and *he* tried to shoot hissself with a unloaded hoe-handle.”

“Did they catch you, Sut?”

“Ketch thunder! *No, sir!* Just look at these-here

legs! Scare me, hoss, just scare me . . . and then watch me while I stay in sight, and you'll never ask that fool question agin. Why, durn it, man, that's what the eight dollars am for.

“Ole Barebelly Bullen, as they calls him now, never preached until yesterday—and he hadn't the first durned woman to hear him; *they have seed too much of him*. Parsons generally have a pow'ful strong hold on women. But, hoss, I tell you there ain't many of 'em kin run stark naked over and through a crowd of three hundred women and not injure their characters some. Anyhow, it's a kind of show they'd rather see one at a time, and pick the parson at that.

“His text were: ‘Naked I come into the world, and naked I'm a-goin outen it, if I'm spared until then.’ He said nakedness weren't much of a sin, particularly of dark nights. That he were a weak, frail worm of the dust, and a heap more such truck.

“Then he touched onto me. Said I were a livin proof of the hell-deservin nature of man, and that there weren't grace enough in the whole 'sociation to soften my outside rind. That I were ‘a lost ball’ forty years afore I were borned, and the best thing they could do for the church were to turn out and still hunt for me until I were shot. And he never said ‘Hell-sarpints’ once't in the whole preach. I b'lieve, George, the durned fools am at it yet.

“Now, I wants you to tell ole Barebelly this for me: If he'll let me and Sall alone, I'll let him alone—a while. And if he don't, if I don't lizard him agin,



I just wish I may be dod-durned! *Scare him if you kin.*

“Let’s go to the spring and take a horn.

“Say, George, didn’t that there Hell-serpent sermon of his’n have somethin like a Hell-serpent application? It looks sorta so to me.”

## BART DAVIS'S DANCE

“Do you know that bow-legged boy on the fence there?” said Sut.

“No. Who is he?”

“That’s Bart Davis’s youngest son, name Obed. Just observe how his snout’s skinned, and his ear slit, and so forth.”

“Yes, I see. How did it happen?”

“Happen? It didn’t happen at all; it were done a-purpose, premeditated a-purpose. There were a dance at his Dad’s last Saturday nite—were two weeks ago—what had like to bred a buryin or two. The corpses were most ready, and nothin but accident kept ’em from bein finished. I were there myself,

and kin say and swear that the chances run mighty even atween mirth and mournin. For a spell it were the excitingest time I ever seed on such an occasion, not to have no more whiskey nor we had. There weren't but 'bout half a barrel when we begun; and when we quit, we burnt the hoops and staves to dance the last reel by.

"Everybody knows Bart is a durned no-count, jug-carryin, slow-thinkin, flea-hurtin, herring-eatin North Carolinian—plays a three-string fiddle with a grasshopper jerk while his wife totes the wood. He has but two gifts worth a durn: one is, he'll divide his whiskey with you down to the last half-pint—there he stops, for that's just a horn, you know. And t'other is, he ain't feared of anything livin, except ole Peg. I don't wonder at that, for it must take a man with a unnaturally big milt not to be feared of his wife, unless she's blind or has a sweetheart. Peg—she's his ole quilt, you know—is a regular steel trap of a woman. She goes with one side of her frock tucked up at the hips, her hair down her back, and a roasted hickory under her arm to scold the brats with and to scare Bart.

"They's both great on dancin of Saturday nites at home, and somewhere else on t'other nites. If there's a frolic anywhere in five mile, Bart is sure to be there. And Peg, too, if she's in travellin fix, which ain't more nor five months in the year. She goes for two reasons: one is, to eat and dance; and t'other, to watch Bart. He has two reasons also: one is to suck in all the whiskey floatin round; and to

do a heap of things what needs watchin. They generally has a domestic discussion after they gets home, in which teeth, claws, and beggin am the arguments, and 'I won't do so no more' the end of it. They am a lively and even-yoked pair. Nobody else on the green earth oughta be tied to either of 'em.

"Well, they mounted that pair of hams you see on the fence there—the boy name Obed—onto a mule, and sent him to the stillhouse, to narrate it that there would be a dance at home the next nite and for every feller what weren't married to fetch a gal, and them what were married to fetch two. Now this 'rangement showed Bart's good sense, for he knowed that it takes more gals to do married fellers than single ones. Cause people what has but one kind of vittles at home, it allers takes more to do 'em abroad.

"When the nite come, they were all there—a house plumb-full—and among 'em a lot of counter-hoppers with striped sugar candy in their pockets and young lawyers with cinnamon oil onto their hair; all on 'em from town and just ole enough to begin to strut and gobble. Thunder and lightnin, and sunflower pattern calico mixed with check and stripe homespun, swept all about there, with one just black silk. They laid off two reels: one called the leather shoe reel, and t'other the barefoot reel. I danced in the one I named last."

"Why did they divide that way, Sut?"

"Why, durn it, don't you know that the dancin would turn into fightin afore the first set got offen the floor if they mixed 'em? The shoes would scronch

the bare toes in dancin, and right then and there they'd mix for a fight.

"A Hard-Shell preacher with his mouth mortised into his face in shape like a mule's shoe—heels down—fetched hisself there soon after dark and made motions like he meant to stay all nite. He got into a corner and commenced a-tunin up his sighin and groanin apparatus, a-shakin of his head and lookin like he had the bellyache. He couldn't have looked more solemncoy if his mam had died that mornin a-owin him two dollars and a half. All these winning and lovely sounds and motions were made on 'count of the dancin, and p'raps the cussin and kissin. The whiskey part of that entertainment he'd nothin against. I *knowed* that; for every time he rolled his eyes to'ards the barrel, he'd lick his lips sorter sloppy-like, just as if he'd been dippin his bill into a crock of chicken gravy and were tryin to save the stray drops what hung outside his face. Oh! He were just a-honin after that bald-face whiskey; he'da just kissed it as sweet, and as long, as if it had been a willin gal.

"I sorta edged up a-side him, and says I: 'Mister, will you have a few drops of campfire, or laudamy? You seems to be pow'ful ailin in your innards. You hasn't swallered a live rat or a mole, has you?'

"He shook his head and fetched a sigh what ended in a groan.

"Says I: 'Rats or moles am unhealthy things to swaller afore they'se departed this life.'

"He blowed out a awful sigh, part outen his nose

but most of it out where the toe of the mule-shoe were, and says he: 'This am a wicked an a parvarse generation of vipers, young man.'

" 'And given up to hardness of heart, and deviltry, and believin thunderin lies,' said I. And I puffed out a big sigh, with a little groan for a tail.

"Says he, 'Thar am no-o-o-o dancin in hell,' and set into shakin of his head, till I thought he'd keep on for everlastin, and ever more.

"Says I: 'Ain't you *slightly* mistakened in that last re-mark of your'n? If there's as much hot truck, and brimstone, and cinders, and hickory smoke, and big hurtin in hell as you folks says there am, there must be *some* dancin, particularly jigs and quick-steps. They don't lack for music, I reckon, for I'se allers heerd hell were full of fiddlers, and there's Yankees enough there to invent fireproof fiddles for 'em, so they don't want for tunes. All on earth that bothers me is the rosin.'

" 'Ah, young unregenerate man,' says he. 'Thar's more rosim in hell than thar's in all Noth Caliny.'

" 'But it ain't quite hard enough to rub onto fiddle bows, is it? says I.

"He groaned and shook his head, and sent one of his eyes to'ards the whiskey gourd. I went and fetched him a big slug into a gourd. That shovel-shaped under lip of his'n just fell out'ards like onto the fallin door of a stone coal stove, and he upset the gourd inside of his teeth. I seed the mark of the truck goin down his throat just like a snake travellin through a wet sausage gut. He smelt into the gourd

a good long smell, turned up his eyes, and said: 'Barlm of life.'

"Thinks I: 'Ole Sock, I know what fetched you to this frolic besides your hoss and our whiskey.' Bart now come up, and Hard-Shell told him he'd come to stay all nite if he suited all round.

" 'Sartinly, oh yas, an' welcome," said Bart.

"The ole Sock, never alterin the shape of the hole tore in his face, said mighty sneerin-like: 'You is hoss-pitable.'

"I seed Bart sorta start and look at him, and go off a-winkin at me to foller him. We went outside the house, into a chimney corner, and there were two fellers—one of 'em a she—a-whisperin. We went to t'other corner, and there were two more. Then we went to the stable and heerd whisperin there; it might been rats a-runnin straw.

"So Bart could hold in no longer. Says he:

" 'Never mind, I don't keer a durn who hears me! I b'lieve I'se been 'sulted in my own house. Didn't that durned preachin-machine call me a hoss?'"

" 'That's just what he said. He called you a hoss-pitable,' says I."

" 'Pitable, pitable,' says Bart. 'Damn if I don't b'lieve that's worse nur the hoss!'"

" 'Sartinly,' says I. 'Pitable is a sorta Latin tail stuck to it so you mightn't understand. It means pitiful hoss in English, and if I were you, I'd see that his stomach were spoiled for Peg's fried chicken and biscuit. I'd go right in and show him how a hoss kin kick and such-like.'

“He just gritted his teeth like he were a-chompin eggshells or paregoric phials, and put for the house, a-rollin up his shirt-sleeves as he went, plumb up to his armpit.

“The durned hypocritical, groanin, ole Hard-Shell rascal had done got the dancin stopped; he’d took the fiddle away from the nigger and were a-holdin it by the neck in one hand, and a-makin gestures with the bow in t’other. He were mounted onto a chair close’t by the meal barrel and were exhortin ’em awfully ’bout their sins of omission and commission, particularly the commission ones, with the dancin ones at the head, wearin sunflower calico next. And then come their smaller sins, such as ridin a-hind fellers on the same hoss; whisperin outen doors; a-winkin a-hind fans, turkey-tails, and hanketchers. Finally he said that black silk were plenty in hell; that it were used for mournin there and not to dance in.

“The *he*-sins of the small sort were comin from town of nites a-wearin store clothes, smellin of cinnamon oil, and a-totin striped sugar-candy in their pockets to turn the minds of the weak gals, instead of a flask of that good, wholesome ole truck what they’s got in towns, name ‘coniac.’

“The women-folks were backed up in bunches in the corners and agin the beds, with their fingers in their mouths, and one or two of the softest of ’em were gettin up a quiet sort of dry cryin.

“The he-fellers all looked like they’d most as leave fight as not if they knew how to start the thing, when



in bounced Bart. He looked like a catamount; one jump and he stood a-top of the meal barrel, square in front of Hard-Shell, his hair a-swayin about with pure mad like a patch of ripe rye in a wind, and his eyes were as round and as red as a bull's when he's a-joinin in battle with another bull from Bashan. He struck one fist away out a-hind and, with t'other reachin at arm's-length, he commenced borin—like he had a gimlet in his shut fist—right under the snout of the thunderin Hard-Shell—like he were tryin to bore his mouth into a better shape—and a-narratin through his teeth these facts, in words what sounded like grittin hard corn:

“*You* durned, infunnel, incompassable water-dog! *You* cussed, hypocritical, ongrateful ole muskrat! *You* hell-fired, divin, splatterin, pond-makin, iron-jacketed, ole son of a mud turtle! You hes 'sulted me in my own house, *an' in Latin et that*, an' then you've tuck the imperdent liberty to scare these yere children outen thar innercent 'musement'—still borin away from left to right with that horny fist of his'n, and the Hard-Shell's head goin further back every twist—'called me a hoss! Git offen that cheer!'”

“As he said 'Git,' Bart loaned the parson a most tremendous contusion right in the bull curl. I seed the parson's shoe soles a-goin up each side of Bart's fist afore Bart had time to move it after he struck. It were a lick, George, that had it been a kick, a four-year-old mule would have been pow'ful proud of. I seed nigh onto a gallon of sparks fly outen the par-

son's eyes myself—he must have seed a bushel—when it reached his curl.

“He let the fiddle go when he were in the highest part of his backward somersault . . . and the nigger, what had been watchin up at it all this time wistful-like as a dog watches a meat-skin when you holds it too high for him to grab, ketched his fiddle in both hands afore it tetched the earth: ‘Dar, by golly. You no git to smash this fiddle wid you durn fool fightin an’ preachin.’ And, holdin it wavigly above his head, the nigger dodged outen the circle of immediate danger.

“The ole Shell lit onto all his fours—it bein that much more nor a full somersault—and *the Black Silk* lit a-straddle of him. I knowed it were the Black Silk because I seed the white stockins and grey garters. Have I mentioned that there were one hundred and twenty-five pounds of live, black-eyed gal in under that black silk?”

“No, Sut.”

“Well, there were; and that she were both live and willin, ole Dipper were soon ready to swear. ‘Black silk in hell is there?’ screamed she, a-hissin like onto a cat, and commenced a-pullin up by the roots his long hair like it were flax—with both hands—and a-shakin the bunches offen her fingers and then goin for more, the hissinn gittin a little louder every pull. George, that were the first specimen of a smokin-mad gal I’ve seed in a hen’s age; she carried out my idea of a first-rate flax-puller pullin agin two for a bet. I think she give the ole Shell the idea that some

strong man-body were a-holdin his head nigh onto the saws of a active cotton gin.

“Now the boy name Obed with the ham legs—havin a sorta Justice-of-the-peace turn of mind—run in to pull her off, and couldn’t do it afore she made a rake for his hair and got it. She just mixed the handful with the pile on the floor and give herself back to the job of preparin the parson for a wig.

“A hawk-billed, weasel-eyed, rat-mouthed feller what had been a-struttin round Black Silk all night, a-trailin one wing and a-lickin his lips, seed the fool boy name Obed a-tryin to git her to light offen the ole Sock. So he just growled low and barked once and covered him, and afore his mam Peg and me and five other gals could git him loose, he had made her cub the spectacle you sees roostin on that-there fence, and he’s had nigh onto three weeks to mend his looks in by Jew David’s plaster, sweet oil, and the care of his mam.

“The fightin now got to be general on most parts of the field; and as the couples come in from outen doors lookin sorta sneakin and pale—from the noise of the rumpus, I expect—one at least outen every pair got jumped on by somebody. P’raps a gal would cover a comin-in gal; another gal would go for the hair and skin of a comin-in he-feller; then agin the fist of a he would meet another comin-in he right atween the eyes; and so on, till the thing got to be durnedably mixed up and lively. Peg bound up the boy name Obed’s wounds, bruises, and putrifyin

sores, and then went on with supper cookin like all were quiet on the Potomac.

“As soon as ole Shell begun to come to from Bart’s double-distilled thunderbolt, the hurtin all over his head begun to attract his ’tention and soaked through his skull, and in there took the shape of an idea. The idea shaped itself into spoken words, and they were: ‘Gird up yer loins an’ *git!*’

“I seed the workin of his mind, so I just shouted as loud as I could beller: ‘The Philistines be upon you, Samson!’

“He heard it, were struck with the force of the remark, and started for the back door—still on his all-fours—in a single-foot rack. As soon as Black Silk felt him movin, she commenced spurrin him with her heels. While she held to his hair with one hand, she took a pin outen her collar with t’other and made a cushion for it in the hill onto the north side of the point of his backbone. He kicked up and snorted, and changed the single-foot rack into a tearin pace, loped outen the door into outer darkness, and his heel-tops were the last I seed of him.

“He stumbled and fell down the log steps, and flung Black Silk like onto a full balloon over his head—I seed a heap of white shinin as she went. He felt his way in the dark thru the woods for more pleasant places. And she come in laughin. ‘Black silk in hell, hey?’ were every word she said.”

“Go on, Sut.”

“That’s all. I ain’t like ole Glabbergab. When I’s spoke off what I knows, I stops talkin.”

“Well, what became of Hård-Shell?”

“Oh! As to that, he made his appearance last Sunday in the pulpit as bald as a jug, with a black spot edged with green and yaller—'bout the size of a prickly pear—on his forehead, and preached 'bout the awful consequences of Absalom's havin long hair; human depravity; and the Salt Lake. Said he were goin there right off, and *he'll do it.*”

## HEN BAILY'S REFORMATION\*

We were resting by a fine, cool spring at noon, with an invitingly-clean gourd hanging on a bush over the water. Sut, as usual, was at full length on the grass, intently looking at the gourd.

“Say, fellers, that-there long-handled gourd there . . . might come the temp’rance dodge over some of you fellers afore you were quite ready for the oath. I looks on ’em all as dangerous, and that’s a monstrous ’spicious-lookin one: it has such a durned

\* This truthful narrative is particularly recommended to the careful consideration of the Rev. Mr. Stiggins, and his disciples, of the Brick Lane Branch of the Grand Junction Ebenezer Temperance Association. This mode of treatment can be fully relied upon.

long handle. Allers 'zamine the inside of a gourd-handle with a sharp, pointed switch afore you drinks; it's a wholesome foresight.

"Hen Baily—did any of you know Hen?—he were a peach with a worm into it, anyhow—a durned, no-count, good, easy, good-for-nothin vagabond, big as a hoss and lazy as a shingle maker, but a pow'ful b'liever. Not a circumcised b'liever, but a lie b'liever of the straightest sect; swallered everything he heerd and most everything he seed. That-there swallerin of his'n come within a eighth of a inch once't of sendin him to Kingdom Come, and did send him head-first into a life-everlastin temp'rance society. I'd a-liked pow'ful well for to hear him give in his experience, even if told one-half. He loved boiled drinks awful; never were a hour's walk from a still-house or a doggery since he took to wearin breeches.

"Well, you see the ole man Rogers up on Lost Creek were a-paintin his house a-new, and Hen were circulatin round there—just prospectin for spirits—and seed a bottle with clear truck in it what he took to be new spirits. So, when the painter's back were turned, he just run its neck down his throat. He fetched it out with a underhanded jerk, flung it ahind him and put—sputterin and yerkin—for the spring, a-swabbin out his mouth with his ole wool hat rolled up. Now, boys, it *were* spirits. But, awful to think of, it were spirits of turpentine, fresh from the rosiny part of Noth Caliney.

"Me and a few other durned fools were at the spring, sorta as we is now, a-mixin a few drops of it

with some limber-leg whiskey and gabblin, when we seed Hen a-comin just a-flutterin. As he run a-past the wash place, he flung the hat swab away and snatched the wash gourd, so as to save time. The durned lazy cuss were in a real, tearin hurry. First time I ever seed him run or come nigh to runnin in all my borned days. His mouth were as red as a split beef, and the light big bubble kind of slobber were a-flyin like snow from a runnin hoss's heels.

"Thinks I: 'Sody, by the great golly! Oh, you damn fool, some gal's come the love-powder game over you perfectly!'

"Hen were troubled in mind for, at the landin part of every jump, he'd say—in sounds like he had a gob of scaldin mush stuck to the roof of his mouth—the words 'Hell-fire.' Nothin else; them were pow'ful suitable words to his case. I didn't think he were so good at pickin out talk; they explained his ailment better nor a doctor could.

"He soused the ole soapsuds gourd into the spring, and then filled his mouth over most half of the edge quicker nor flea ketchin. As he turned it up, I seed a stripèd, eight-inch lizard come tearin outen the handle where he'd been hid as *he* thought. He set his forepaws onto the edge of the gourd and peeped over. Seein us give him a turnin scare, and he just darted down Hen's throat. I seed his tail fly up agin Hen's snout as he started downhill. The reptile took his mouth to be a providential hole in the ground, and I doesn't wonder, for it woulda fooled a kingfisher anytime.



“Hen dropped the empty gourd and, holdin his belly in his locked hands, said: ‘Warter makes it wus, boys.’

“Says I: ‘Hen, it’s the lizard.’

“He walled round his sweaty, stuck-out eyes at me, and says he: ‘What lizard?’

“‘Why, that big, striped, he-lizard what you let run down your throat just now outen the gourd-handle. I expect I were the last person what seed outside of you, for I seed the point of his tail after it passed the gap where that ’ere front tooth come out.’

“He looked a sorta listenin look down at the ground for a second, and set into hoppin up and down onto one leg and onto t’other, a-shakin in the air the leg what weren’t immediately engaged in hoppin, and mentionin ‘Hell-fire’ every time he changed legs—and that were every two hops. Then he fell down and set into rollin worse nor a young dog what has ignorantly yamped a polecat. He kep a-tuckin his head sorta under, like he were trying to make it roll faster nor his body. Says he:

“‘Great fathers, boys. He’s a-gallopin round he is, by gracious!’

“Says I: ‘Hen, he’s a-zaminin your whiskey bag for a good spot to build his nest in. He means to stay.’

“‘Oh, lordy!’ yelled Hen. ‘He’s done found it, and’s a-tearin up the linin of my paunch to build it with,’ and he rolled on faster nor ever. ‘Sut, ef you please, run fur a doctor. You hes the laigs.’

“‘Yas,’ says I. ‘But it’s done gone far apast common doctorin.’

“When Hen heerd that verdict, he flounced to his feet, fetched a yell what if it had went through a three-foot tin horn woulda busted it plumb open from end to end, and set into flingin the best kind of show-actor somersaults among the round rocks in the spring branch: back’ards twice, for-ards once’t, then sidewise, now a full turn and a half that would fetch him onto his head, now a half-turn and that would land him onto his stern. Durnation, how he’d spatter water when he made the three-quarter turns; then clean over his feet he’d come, just to yell and fling some more.

“I counted till it got to thirty-one, and got outen heart and quit. A circus agent woulda given him big wages just then; but he’d been the worst-fooled man ever borned, unless he meant to dose Hen with turpentine and lizards, and I doubt its movin him a second time. Durned if his carryings-on didn’t ‘mind me of my sody-misery in a minute; it struck me so pow’ful that I had a violent, searchin blow of belly-ache right there. Says I:

“That’s right, Hen. Just you keep on, and you’ll soon make that-there lizard b’lieve he’s took up lodgins in the cylinder of a four-hoss threshin-machine and that harvest time am come. He’s bound to vacate you. Just wrassle on, hoss. That’s it. No mortal lizard kin stand that sort of churnin among such a mixin as you generally totes into your paunch.’

“‘Oh, lordy! Sut, you’s e right, fur I raley do b’lieve he’s cuttin his way out now. Can’t you’—and

over he'd go again—'do something?' Over once't more.

"'You damn fool,' says I. 'I don't know. But, if you means to keep on at that rate, I would suggest that you swaller a few of these-here round rocks 'bout as big as goose-eggs, and damn if he ain't a grown-up reptile sooner nor if he were in a hungry goose's gizzard.'

"He made a motion or two like he were grabbin for rocks as he alighted, but just then he changed his mind and set into runnin round the springhouse, a-leanin to'ards it and just a-missin the corners. He went so fast he looked like three or four fellers after each other groanin, hollerin, and remarkin 'Hell-fire' all round there. He's a pow'ful-active injurin man when under stimuluses, that's a fact. I took a stand nigh onto one corner and, as he come round, I commenced in time and said: 'Hen, did you take your sody separate?'

"Next time he come, says he, 'Sody separate—hell!' And next round says he: 'Aqua fortis.' And the next after that he added the words: 'Fourth proof at that.' He were goin so fast that his talkin seemed uninterrupted. The last time he come round he hol-lered in despair, 'I hain't a-gainin on hit a damn bit,' and took hisself up a red elm.

"He went up by fast jerks, just exactly like a cat climbs a apple tree from a close-comin dog. He locked his footses round the lowest limbs and hung head down, swingin about and smackin his hands like he

were nigh the shoutin point of happiness at a raving camp-meeting.

“Says I: ‘*That* won’t do. That’s a worse idea nor circlin the springhouse were, and don’t compare with your circus experiment; for the lizard went pow’fully *downhill* a-goin into that sloppy hole he’s into now, and he’s too smart to start *downhill* any more for fear it’ll git worse. He won’t come, Hen.’

“He answered me monstrous cross and spiteful: ‘Let him go *uphill* then, damn him! So he keeps goin’s all I ask.’

“The lizard were a-tearin round right purt, I expect, wadin and swimmin as if he were in a dark pond of whiskey and turpentine, thickened with a breakfast of blackberries and mush, stirred into a perfect hurricane by Hen’s carryings-on. It weren’t just exactly the right place for even a varmint to go to sleep in, anyhow.

“Hen soon found that it would neither go uphill nor downhill, but kep a-tearin round at random with its long toenails, so he lost all hope, let his foot-holds loose, and sunk his nose up to his ears in the branch-bank mud and, by golly, lay still.

“I begun to think the show were about to close, and I had rights to think so: thirty-one counted somersaults, and lots of uncounted ones, averagin a full turn each; a mile and a quarter round a springhouse; and nine hundred yards in rollin, not countin the small motions; all in ’bout five minutes, were nigh onto enough to fetch any man-body to lie still. And then the lizard and turpentine. . . . It were a job of

no common kind, and 'specially for Hen it were most wonderful. Thinks I: 'Ole feller, you're going to make a die of it.' And says I: 'Hen, ole feller. While you's a-restin there, just feel in your trousers and git me that half-dollar you borrowed from me last Christmas. Feel easy for it and don't scare your lizard.'

"He never let on like he heerd me.

"Says I: 'Here, Hen, try a little of this-here *whiskey*.' I mentioned 'whiskey' loud; damn if even that moved the *points* of his fingers.

"Says I: 'Boys, he's 'bout done with earthly matters—he won't notice whiskey—and his hereafter's within ten steps of him right now.'

"Ole Missis Rogers heerd the fuss and seed the crowd round her springhouse, and the safety of her milk and butter struck her pow'ful. So here she come, with her ole brass specks ridin a-straddle of the highest point of her calico-cap crown; their legs were a-usin two locks of her red roan hair for stirrups away below her ears. She had a boiled roastin ear most of the time acrosst her mouth, with silks and smashed grains aplenty stickin to her ole moley chin and her nose.

"Says she: 'What upon earth you all doin here—not holdin meetin, sure? Ah! You am there, am you, laigs, you dad-dratted, draggled sand-hill crane? Some devilment on hand, right now. Clear yourselves, you nasty, stinkin, low-lived, sheep-killin dorgs. S-n-e-a-k off, afore you steals somethin. Yere Rove, yere Rove, yere, yere!'

"Says I, monstrous-solemn, straightenin myself up

with folded arms: 'Missis Rogers, afore your dog Rove comes, take a look at some of your work. That-there a-dyin feller-being. Just let a few of your bowels melt and pour out right here in pity and remorse.'

"She took a short look at Hen. 'What ails *him*?'"

"Says I, with my arms stretched straight out: 'Colic; violent, corkscrew colic; one of the cholera persuasion. He just tasted your buttermilk in there and, by granny, it's done killed him, that's all, Missis Rogers.' You see, she were noted for feedin the work-hands on buttermilk so sour that it would eat its way outen a earthen crock in one night.

"Says she, with her hands onto her hips and standin wide and straight up: 'You're a liar, Mister Lovin-good.' I has allers noticed nobody ever calls me 'Mister Lovin-good'—if they knows me—unless they's mad at me.

"'Very well,' says I. 'We am goin to strip him now, and you kin see for yourself. It's et its way outen him by this time; just stay and 'zamine his belly. I'll bet you my shirt agin that-there momoxed roastin ear, that it's chawed into dishrags from his waistband clean down to—' She flung down the roastin ear and put for the house, a-totin her frock-tail high—held up with both her hands—without waitin for me to add 'his fork.'

"I were gittin sorta scared and sorry both for Hen, the ornery devil, and were a-lookin at the ground, studyin if it weren't best to knock him on the head with a rock and put him outen his misery, when I seed the break and bulge of a mole a-plowin.

A idea—the best idea I ever owned—struck plumb through my head, and I dug out the mole.

“Says I: ‘Boys, listen to me: that-there feller’s monstrous nigh dead; desp’rate cases wants desp’rate doctorin; let’s tie his galluses round his waistband tight, and start this here blind, furry, scramblin, little cuss up his breeches leg. When he feels the scramblin sensation on the outside, he’ll think the lizard has got out somewhere, and the idea will make him feel good anyhow, live or dead; there’s no harm in a mole, nohow; let’s try it.’

“We turned Hen onto his stomach and made the top of his britches mole-tight; and I set the mole a-straddle of Hen’s heel string and sunk my thumbnail into its tail. Away it went up Hen’s bare leg pow’ful fast, rootin like a hog; he wanted to go to his trade of diggin agin, you know, and were searchin for a soft place. He weren’t outen sight very long when Hen sorta started for’ard on his stomach; that were the first sign of life he’d showed since he buried his nose in the blue mud.

“Says I, with a heap of hope: ‘Boys, things am workin; if he wouldn’t notice spirits, he’s a-noticin that-there mole.’

“Hen had a pair of foot-holds agin a root, and he shot hissself for’ard ten foot into the branch at one lunge, without risin four inches from the ground. I thought I heerd ‘Hell-fire’ agin, in a sorta sick whisper. He riz to his all-fours and shook the water outen his ears ’pearingly as strong as ever, and took down the branch in a real fast cavalry lope. He made

the mud and water fly, 'specially when he'd kick, and that were every two or three jumps. He used his hind legs just like a hoss a-fightin, and as he'd fling up his shoes he'd mention the kind of fire I's been telling you about, and he'd wall a monstrous searchin uneasy eye over his shoulder every time he'd kick.

"Says I: 'Boys, the show ain't over yet; let's see the end and git the worth of our money.'

"One or two of the crowd dodged into the bushes sorta deserted; they were feared to see any more. The rest of us follered Hen. When he'd come to a deep hole, he'd squat into it up to his ears, a-sorta workin hisself round like a hen a-fixin her nest, gruntin awful and a-cussin everybody and everything in a lump. Then he'd rear for'ard onto his all-fours agin and just travel. I can't for the life of me think what kep' him down to his all-fours. If it had been my case, you'da seed some of the durndest, straightest up-and-down runnin ever did by any livin mortal. P'raps the carryings-on in his innards weren't as searchin in that position. At last he galloped out onto a sand bank and sunk, spread out, with his head in a short twist, nigh clean gone.

"Says I: 'Boys, the durned fool has drownded my mole atwixt his breeches and his hide a-squattin in them holes, and I has no hopes of him now; let's kill him.'

"Just then I seed him jerk, sorta vomitin-way, so I straddled him and catched him by the hair and pulled up his head to straighten his swaller, when immediately here come the lizard tearin outen his



mouth, the worst-scared varmint I ever seed in all my borned days. His eyes were as big as fox grapes, and most all of 'em outside of his head; and damn if he didn't have enough to scare a lion, for the mole had him fast by the tail and were mendin his hold, and that-there enterprisin little earth-borer hadn't a durned morsel of fur left onto his hide; it were all *limed* off. He looked right down slick and funny with a lizard a-haulin him through the sand, I swear he did. Wonder what *they* thought had been happenin'?

“Well, we toted Hen home and, when he got sorta well, he joined a ole well-set temp'rance s'ciety, and puts it up that the whole thing—turpentine, lizards, and mole—were interposition to save him from turnin into a drunkard. The cussed hypocrite! He weren't never anything else. I oughtn't to speak hard of the misfortunate critter though, for he has got the dyspepsy, the worst kind.”



PART FIVE

**SUT  
MEETS  
THE LAW**



RARE  
RIPE GARDEN-SEED

“I tell you now, I minds my first big scare just as well as rich boys minds their first boots or seein the first spotted-horse circus. The red top of them boots am still a rich, red stripe in their minds, and the burnin red of my first scare has left as deep a scar onto my thinking works.

“Mam had me a-standin atwixt her knees. I kin feel the knobs of her joints a-rattlin a-past my ribs yet. She didn’t have much petticoats to speak of, and I had but one—and it were calico slit from the nape of my neck to the tail, held together at the top with a draw-string and at the bottom by the hem. It were the handiest clothes I ever seed, and would be pow’ful

comfortin in summer if it weren't for the flies. If they was good to run in, I'd wear one yet. They beats pasted shirts and britches as bad as a featherbed beats a bag of walnut shells for sleepin on.

"Say, George, wouldn't you like to see me in one—'bout half-faded, slit—and a-walkin just so up the middle street of your city church, a-aimin for your pew pen—and it chock-full of your fine, city-gal friends—just after the people had set down from the first prayer, and the organ beginnin to groan? What would you do in such a 'mergency, say, hoss?"

"Why, I'd shoot you dead, Monday morning before eight o'clock," was my reply.

"Well, I expect you would. But you'd take a real old-maid faint first, right among them-there gals. Lordy! Wouldn't you be shamed of me! Yet why not 'tend church in such a suit, when you hasn't got no store clothes?"

"Well, as I were sayin, Mam were feedin us brats onto mush and milk—without the milk—and as I were the baby then she held me so as to see that I got my share. Where there ain't enough feed, big childer roots little childer outen the trough and gobbles up their part. Just so the earth over: bishops eats elders; elders eats common people; they eats such cattle as me; I eats possums; possums eats chickens; chickens swallows worms; and worms am content to eat dust; and the dust am the end of it all. It am all as regular as the sounds from the treble down to the bull bass of a fiddle in good tune, and I expect it am right or it wouldn't be 'lowed.

“‘*The sheriff!*’ hissed Mam in a keen, tremblin whisper. It sounded to me like the screech of a hen when she says ‘Hawk’ to her little, round-sterned, fuzzy, bead-eyed, stripèd-backs.

“I acted just exactly as they does. I darted on all fours under Mam’s petticoat-tails, and there I met—face to face—the wooden bowl and the mush and the spoon what she slid under from t’other side. I’s mad at myself yet, for right there I showed the first flash of the natural-born, durn fool what I now is. I oughta et it all up, in jestic to my stomach and my growin, while the sheriff were a-levyin onto the bed and the chairs. To this day, if anybody says ‘Sheriff,’ I feels scare; and if I hears ‘Constable’ mentioned, my legs goes through runnin motions, even if I is asleep. Did you ever watch a dog dreamin of rabbit-huntin? Them’s the motions, and the feelin am the rabbit’s.

“Sheriffs am awful ’spectable people; everybody looks up to ’em. I never exactly seed the ’spectable part myself. I’s too feared of ’em, I reckon, to examine for it too much. One thing I knows: no country atwixt here and Tophet kin ever elect me to sell out widders’ plunder or poor men’s corn, and the thoughts of it gives me a good feelin; it sorta flashes through my heart when I thinks of it.

“I asked a parson once’t what it could be, and he pronounced it to be *unregenerate pride*, what I oughta squelch in prayer and in ’tendin church on collection days. I were in hopes it might be religion or sense soakin into me. It feels good, anyhow, and

I don't care if every circuit rider outen jail knows it. Sheriffs' shirts allers has nettle dust or fleas inside of 'em when they lies down to sleep, and I'se glad of it, for they'se allers discomfortin me, durn em. I scarcely ever git to drink a horn or eat a mess in peace. I'll hurt one some day, see if I don't. Show me a sheriff a-steppin softly round and a-sorta sightin at me, and I'll show you a fair sample of the speed of a express engine fired up with rich, dry, rosiny scares. They don't ketch me *much*, usin only human legs as weapons.

"Ole John Dolton were a 'spectable sheriff, monstrously so, and had the best scent for poor, fugitive devils—and women—I ever seed; he were sure-fire. Well, he toted a warrant for this-here skinful of durned fool 'bout that there misfortunate nigger-meetin business, until he wore it into six separate square bits and had wore out much shoe-leather a-chasin of me. I'd found a doggerly in full milk, and hated pow'ful bad to leave that settlement while it sucked free. So I set into sorta try and wean him off from botherin me so much. I succeeded so well that he not only quit racin of me—and women—but he were totally spoiled as a sheriff and lost the 'spectable section of his character. To make you fool fellers understand how it were done, I must introduce your minds to one Wat Mastin, a bullet-headed, young blacksmith.

"Well, last year—no, it were the year afore last—in struttin and gobblin time, Wat felt his keepin right warm, so he set into bellerin and pawin up dust in



the neighborhood round the ole widder McKildrin's. The more dust he flung up, the worse he got, until at last he just couldn't stand the ticklin sensations another minute. So he put for the county court clerk's office, with his hands socked down deep into his britches-pockets like he were feared of pickpockets, his back roached round, and a-chompin his teeth until he splotched his whiskers with foam. Oh! He were earnest-hot, and as restless as a cockroach in a hot skillet."

"What was the matter with this Mr. Mastin? I cannot understand you, Mr. Lovingood. Had he hydrophobia?" remarked a man in a square-tail coat and cloth gaiters, who was obtaining subscribers for some forthcoming Encyclopedia of Useful Knowledge . . . who had quartered at our camp, uninvited and really unwanted.

"What do you mean by high-dry-foby?" and Sut looked puzzled.

"A madness produced by being bit by some rabid animal," explained Square-tail in a pompous manner.

"Yas, hoss, he had high-dry-foby awful; and Mary McKildrin, the widder McKildrin's only daughter, had give him the complaint. I don't know whether she bit him or not; he mighta ketched it from her breath; and he were now in the roach-back, chompin stage of the sickness, so he were after the clerk for a ticket to the hospital.

"Well, the clerk sold him a piece of paper, part printin and part writin, with a picture of two pigs' hearts—what some boy had shot a arrow through and

left it stickin—printed at the top. That paper were a splicin pass—some calls it a pair of license—and that very night he took Mary, for better, for worse, to have and to hold to him his heirs, and—”

“Allow me to interrupt you,” said our guest. “You do not quote the marriage ceremony correctly.”

“You go to *hell*, mistofer. You bothers me.” This outrageous rebuff took the stranger all aback and he sat down.

“Where were I? Oh, yas, he married Mary tight and fast, and next day he were able to be about. His coat, though, and his trousers looked just a scrimption too big, loose-like, and heavy to tote. I asked him if he felt sound. He said ‘yas,’ but he’d welded a steamboat shaft the day afore and were sorta tired-like. There he told a durn lie, for he’d been a-hornin up dirt most of the day round the widder’s garden, and bellerin in the orchard.

“Mary and Wat set square into housekeepin, and among other things he bought a lot of *rare ripe garden-seed* from a Yankee peddler. Rare ripe corn, rare ripe peas, rare ripe taters, rare ripe everything, and the two, young, durned fools were dreadfully exercised ’bout it. Wat said he meant to git him a rare ripe hammer and anvil, and Mary vowed to gracious that she’d have a rare ripe wheel and loom if money would git em.

“Purty soon after Wat had made the garden, he took a notion to work a spell down to Atlanta, in the railroad shop, as he said he had a sorta ailin in his back, and he thought weldin rail car-tire and engine

axletrees were lighter work nor sharpenin plows and puttin lap-links in trace-chains. So down he went, and found it agreed with him, for he didn't come back until the middle of August.

"The first thing he seed when he landed into his cabin-door were a shoe-box with rockers under it; and the next thing he seed were Mary herself, propped up in bed; and the next thing he seed after that were a pair of little rat-eyes a-shinin above the end of the quilt onto Mary's arm; and the next and last thing he seed were the two little rat-eyes afore-said a-turnin into two hundred thousand big green stars, and a-swinging round and round the room, faster and faster, until they mixed into one awful green flash. He dropped into a limber pile on the floor. The durned fool what had welded the steam-boat shafts had fainted safe and sound as a gal scared at a mad bull.

"Mary fetched a weak cat-scream, and covered her head and set into work onto a whifflin dry cry, while little rat-eyes give itself up to suckin. Cryin and suckin both at once't ain't fair; must come pow'ful strainin on the wet section of a woman's constitution; yet it am often done, and more too.

"Ole Missis McKildrin—what were a-nursin Mary—just got up from knittin and flung a big gourd of water square into Wat's face. Then she fetched a glass bottle of swell-skull whiskey outen the three-cornered cupboard and stood fornent Wat, a-holdin it in one hand and the tin cup in t'other, waitin for Wat to come to. She were the pious-est lookin ole

woman just then you ever seed outside of a prayer-meetin.

“After a spell, Wat begin to move, twitchin his fingers and battin his eyes sorta ’stonished-like. That pious-lookin statue said to him:

“ ‘My son, jis’ take a drap of sperrits, honey. You’s e very sick, dumplin. Don’t take on, darlin, ef you kin help it, ducky, fur poor Margaret Jane am mons’rous ailin, and the leas’ nise or takin-on will kill the poor sufferin dear, and you’ll loose your tuckil ducky dove of a sweet wifey, arter all she’s done gone through fur you. My dear son Watty, you mus’ consider her feelins a little.’

“Says Wat, a-turnin up his eyes at that virtuous ole relic, sorta sick-like: ‘I is a-considerin ’em a heap, right now.’

“ ‘Oh, that’s right, my good, kine child.’

“Oh, damn if ole mother-in-laws can’t plaster humbug over a feller, just as soft and easy as they spreads a cambric hanketcher over a three-hour-ole baby’s face. You don’t feel it at all, but it am there, a plumb inch thick, and stickin fast as courtplaster.

“She raised Wat’s head, and set the edge of the tin cup agin his lower teeth, and turned up the bottom slow and careful, a-winkin at Mary who were a-peepin over the edge of the coverlet to see if Wat *took the prescription*, for a heap of family comfort ’pended on that-there horn of spirits.

“*One* horn allers softens a man, the earth over. Wat keep a-battin his eyes worse nor a owl in daylight. At last he raised hissself onto one elbow and

rested his head in that hand, sorta weak-like. Says he, monstrous tremblin and slow, 'April—May—June—July—and mos'—half—of—August,' a-countin the months onto the fingers of t'other hand with the thumb, a-shakin of his head and lookin at his spread fingers like they weren't his'n, or they were nastied with somethin. Then he counted 'em agin, slower, 'April—May—June—July—and—mos'—half—of August,' and he run his thumb atwixt his fingers as meanin most half of August, and looked at the point of it like it might be a snake's head.

"He raised his eyes to the widder's face, who were standin just as steady as a hitchin post, and still a-wearin that pious expression onto her personal features, and a flood of soft love for Wat a-shinin straight from her eyes into his'n. Says he: 'That jis' makes four months, and mos' a half, don't hit, Missis McKildrin?' She never said one word.

"Wat reached for the hearth and got a dead fire-coal. Then he made a mark clean across't a floor-plank. Says he, 'April,' a-holdin down the coal onto the end of the mark, like he were feared it might blow away afore he got it christened 'April.' Says he, 'May,' and he marked across the board agin. Then he counted the marks, 'One, two,' a-dottin at 'em with the coal. 'June,' and he marked agin; 'One, two, three' counted with the point of the coal. He scratched his head with the little finger of the hand holdin the charcoal, and he drawed it slowly across't the board agin, peepin under his wrist to see when it reached the

crack and says he 'July' as he lifted the coal. 'One, two, three, four,' countin from left to right, and then from right to left. 'That hain't but four, no way I kin fix it. Ole Pike hissef couldn't make hit five, ef he were to cipher onto hit until his laigs turned into figger eights.' Then he made a mark half-across't a plank, spit on his finger and rubbed off a half inch of the end, and says he: 'Mos' half of August.'

"He looked up at the widder, and there she were, same as ever, still a-holdin the flask agin her bosom, and says he: 'Four months, an' mos' a half. *Hain't enough, is hit, mammy?* It's jis' 'bout (lackin a little) *half enough*, hain't it, mammy?'

"Missis McKildrin shook her head sorta uncertain-like, and says she:

"'Take a drap more sperrits, Watty, my dear pet. Dus you mine buyin that ar rar ripe seed from the peddler?'

"Wat nodded his head and looked 'what of it,' but didn't say it.

"'This is what comes of hit, an' four months an' a half am rar ripe time fur babies, exactly. To be sure, hit lacks a day or two, but Margaret Jane were allers a pow'ful enterprisin gal an' a early riser.'

"Says Wat: 'How about the taters?'

"'Oh, *we* et taters es big es goose aigs afore ole Missis Collins'es blossomed.'

"'How 'bout co'n?'

"'Oh, we shaved down roastin years afore her'n tasseled—'

"'An' peas?'

“ ‘Yes, son, we hed gobs an’ lots in three weeks. Everything comes in exactly half the time that hit takes the ole sort and, you *knows*, my darlin son, you planted hit wasteful. I thought then you’d rar ripe everythin on the place. You planted *often*, too, didn’t you, love? Fur fear hit wouldn’t come up.’

“ ‘Ye—ye—s—s he—he did,’ said Mary, a-cryin.

“ ‘Wat studied pow’ful deep a spell, and the widder just waited. Widders allers wait, and allers win. At last says he: ‘Mammy.’

“ ‘She looked at Mary and winked these-here words at her, as plain as she could a-talked em: ‘You hearn him call me *mammy twice’t*. I’se *got him* now. His back-bone’s a-limberin fas’; he’ll own the baby yet, see ef he don’t. Jis’ hole still, my darter, and let yer mammy knead this dough; then you may bake hit es brown es you please.’

“ ‘Mammy, when I married on the fust day of April—’ The widder looked uneasy; she thought he might be a-couplin that day, his weddin, and the idea, damn fool, together. But he weren’t, for he said: ‘That day I gin ole man Collins my note of hand fur a hundred dullars, jew in one year arter date, the balance on this land. Does you think that ar seed will change the *time* any, or will hit alter the *amount*?’ And Wat looked at her pow’ful anxious.

“ ‘She raised the whiskey bottle way above her head, with her thumb on the mouth, and fetched the bottom down onto her hand *spat!* Says she: ‘Watty, my dear b’loved son, prepar to pay *two* hundred dullars ’bout the fust of October, fur hit’ll be jew jis’ then, *es* sure

es that little, black-eyed angel in the bed thar am yer darter.'

"Wat dropped his head and said: '*Then hit's a damn sure thing.*'

"Right here the baby fetched a rattlin loud squall; I expect Mary were sorta fidgety just then and hurt it.

"'Yas,' says Wat, a-wallin a red eye towards the bed. 'My little she—what were hit you called her name, mammy?'

"'I called her a sweet, little angel, an' she is one es sure es you're her daddy, my b'loved son.'

"'Well,' says Wat. 'My little sweet patent, rar ripe she-angel, ef you lives to marryin-time you'll 'stonish some manbody outen his shut, ef you don't rar ripe lose your virtue arter the fust plantin, that's all.' He reared up on end with his mouth pouched out. He had a pow'ful for'ard, far-reaching bread-funnel anyhow—could a-bit the eggs outen a catfish in two-foot water without wettin his eyebrows. 'Dod durn rar ripe seed, and rar ripe peddlers, and rar ripe notes to the hottes' corner of—'

"'Stop, Watty, *darlin*, don't swar. 'Member you belongs to meetin.'

"'My blacksmith's fire,' ended Wat, and he studied a long spell. Says he finally: 'Did you save any of that infunnal double-trigger seed?'

"'Yas,' says the widder. 'Thar in that bag by the cupboard.'

"Wat got up offen the floor, took a countin-sorta look at the charcoal marks, and reached down the



bag. He went to the door and called: 'Suke, muley! Suke, suke, cow; chick, chick, chicky chick.'

"'What's you gwine to do now, my dear son?' said Missis McKildrin.

"'I'se jis' gwine to feed this active, smart truck to the cow an' the hens, that's what I'se gwine to do. Ole muley hain't hed a calf in two years, and I'll eat some rar ripe aigs.'

"Mary now ventured to speak: 'Husband, I hain't sure hit'll work on hens. Come an' kiss me, my love.'

"'I hain't sure hit'll work on hens either,' said Wat. 'They's pow'ful onsartin in their ways, well es women,' and he flung out a handful spiteful-like. 'Takin the rar ripe invention all together, from taters and peas to notes of hand and childer, I can't say I likes hit much,' and he flung out another handful. 'Yer mam had thuteen the ole way, an' ef this truck stays 'bout the house, you'se good for twenty-six, maybe thirty, for you'se a pow'ful enterprisin gal yer mam says,' and he flung out another handful, overhanded, as hard as if he were flingin rocks at a stealin sow.

"'Make yer mine easy,' said the widder. 'Hit never works on married folks only the fust time.'

"'Say them words agin,' says Wat. 'I'se glad to hear 'em. Is hit the same way wif notes of hand?'

"'I speck hit am,' answered the widder, with just a taste of strong vinegar in the words, as she set the flask in the cupboard with a push.

"Just then ole Dolton, the Sheriff, rid up and started astonished when he seed Wat; but he, quick

as a woman kin hide a strange hat, drew the puckerin-string of that legal face of his'n, and fetched it up to the 'Knowed you were at home' sorta look and, wishin Wat much joy, said he'd fetched the baby a present—a pair of red shoes and a calico dress—for the love he bore its grandmam.

"Missis McKildrin told him what the rare ripe had done, and he swore it allers worked just that way, and were astonished at Wat's not knowin it. And they talked so fast, and so much, that the more Wat listened the less he knowed.

"After the Sheriff left, they unrolled the bundle, and Wat stretched out the calico in the yard. He stepped it off carefully, ten yards and a little the rise. He pursed up his mouth and blowed out a whistle seven-foot long, lookin up and down the middle stripe of the drygoods from end to end. Says he: 'Missis McKildrin, that'll make Rar Ripe a good, *full* frock, won't hit?'

"'Y-a-s,' said she, with her hands laid up along her jaw like she were studyin the thing carefully. 'My son, I thinks hit will. And I were jis' a-thinkin, ef hit were cut to 'vantage, there might be 'nough left squeezed out to make you a Sunday-shirtin shirt, makin the ruffles and band outen somethin else.'

"'Put hit in the bag what the rar ripe were in, and by mornin thar'll be 'nough for the ruffles and band, and you might make the tail to drag the earth without squeezin or piecin,' says Wat. And he put a few small wrinkles in the point of his nose what seemed to bother the widder to make out the meaning of;

they looked monstrous like the outward signs of an unbeliever.

“Just then his eyes set fast onto somethin a-lyin on the ground where he’d unrolled the bundle. He walked up to it slow, sorta like a feller goes up to a log after he thinks he seed a snake run under. He walked clean round it twice’t, never takin his eyes offen it. At last he lifted it on his instep, and held out his leg straight at that widdered mother-in-law of his’n. Says he: ‘What might you call that? Red baby’s shoes don’t ginerally hev teeth, does they?’

“‘Don’t you *know* hit’s a tuck-in comb, Watty? The store-keeper’s made a sorta blunder, I speck,’ said that virtuous petticoat-full of widderhood.

“‘Maybe he hes; I’se durn sure I hes,’ said Wat, and he wrinkled his nose agin monstrous-botheringly to that watchful widder. He scratched his head a spell. Says he: ‘Ten yards an’ the rise fur a baby’s frock, *an’ hit rar ripe at that, gits me*; and that ar tuck-in comb gits me worse.’

“‘Oh, fiddlesticks and flusteration,’ says she. ‘Save the comb; baby’ll soon want hit.’

“‘That’s so, mammy, I’m damn ef hit don’t,’ and he slipped his foot from under it, and it scarcely tetched the earth afore he stomped it and the teeth flew all over the widder. He looked like he’d been stompin a blowin adder, and went a-past the woman into the cabin in a real April-turkey-gobbler strut.

“‘When Wat’d tore the wrapper off the Sheriff’s present, I seed a little bit of white paper fall out. Unbeknownst to anybody, I set my foot onto it; and

when they went in, I socked it deep into my pocket and went over to the stillhouse.

“I took Jim Duncan out and, after swearin him with a uplifted hand to keep dark, got him to read it to me until it were printed on the mindin-section of my brain. It run just so:

“My sweet Mary:

I mayn’t git the chance tu talk eny tu yu, so when Wat gits home, an’ axes enything ’bout the *comb an’ calliker*, yu tell him yer mam foun the bundil in the road. She’ll back yu up in that ar statement, ontill thar’s enuf white fros’ in hell to kill snapbeans.

Yures till deth,

Dolton

*Notey Beney*.—I hope Wat’ll stay in Atlanty ontill the merlenium, don’t yu, my dear duv?”

And to that-there last remark he’d set a big ‘D.’ I reckon he meant that for ‘Damn Wat.’

“Now, I just knowed as long as I had that paper I held four aces onto the Sheriff, and I meant to bet on the hand and *go halves with Wat*, for I were sorry for him—he were so infernally imposed upon. I went to school to Sicily Burns to learn woman tricks, and I took a diploma, I did, and now I’d just like to see the personal features of the she-woman what could stack rare ripe cards on me, durned fool as I is.

“I had a talk with Wat, and soon found out that his mind had simmered down into a strong belief that

the Sheriff and Mary were doin their weavin in the same loom. Then I showed him my four aces, and that chip made the pot boil over, and he just 'greed to be led by me—spontaneously.

“Just think on that fact a minute, boys. A man what had sense enough to turn a hoss shoe—and then nail it on toe-end foremost—being led by me looks sorta like a plum tree bearin timplebug balls, but it were just so, and durn my picture if I didn't lead him to victory straight along.

“Wat narrated it that he b'lieved strongly in rare ripe, from beans through notes of hand plumb to babies, and that his cabin should never be without it. The widder were cheerful, Mary were lovin, and the Sheriff were told on the sly by ole Mister McKildrin's remainin and most pious she-half, that Wat were as plumb blind as if his eyes were two turtle eggs. So the wool growed over *his* eyes until it were fit to shear, and *damn if I weren't at the shearin.*

“Things, therefore, went smooth, and as quiet as a greased wagon runnin in sand. It's allers so just afore a tearin, big storm.

“By the time little Rare Ripe were ten weeks ole, Dolton begun to be pow'ful plenty in the neighborhood. Even the brats knowed his hoss's tracks, and go where he would, the road led nigh onto Wat's, or the widder's, to git there. My time to play my four aces had 'bout come.”

“And so has orderly bed-time. I wish to repose,” remarked the man of Useful Knowledge in the square-tail coat and cloth gaiters.

Sut opened his eyes in wonder: "You wish to do what?"

"I wish to go to sleep."

"Then why the hell didn't you say so? You must talk English to me or not git yourself understood. I weren't educated at no Injun or nigger school. Say, bunt, weren't you standin deep in some creek when the tailorman put the string to you for that-there cross atwix a roundabout and a flour barrel what you'se got on in place of a coat?"

My self-made guest looked appealingly at me as he untied his gaiters, evidently deeply insulted. I shook my head at Sut, who was lying on his breast with his arms crossed for a pillow, but—with head elevated like a lizard's—watching the traveller's motions with great interest.

"Say, George, what does 'repose' mean? That word were used at me just now."

"Repose means rest."

"Oh, the devil it does! I'se glad to hear it; I thought it were personal. I kin repose now myself. Say, ole Unsightly Peter, repose some to you, if you kin, in that flour barrel. I ain't goin to hunt for your hair until mor—" and Sut slept.

When morning broke the Encyclopedia, or Unsightly Peter as Sut pronounced it, had:

"Folded his tent like the Arab,  
And as silently stole away."

## CONTEMPT OF COURT—ALMOST

“Ole Unsightly Peter took his square-tail carcass cover away from this-here hospitable camp without asking for his bill or even sayin ‘Mornin’ to us. Let’s look round a little; I bet he’s stole somethin. Fellers of his stripe allers does. They never thinks a night’s-lodgin complete unless they hooks a bed-quilt, or a candlestick, or some such-like.

“I hates ole Unsightly Peter just cause he didn’t seem to like to hear me narrate last night. That’s human nature the earth over, and here’s more universal, unregenerate human nature: if ever you does anything to anybody without cause, you hates ’em allers afterwards and sorta wants to hurt ’em agin.

“And here’s another human nature: if anything happens to some feller—I don’t care if he’s your best best friend, and I don’t care how sorry you is for him—there’s a streak of satisfaction ’bout like a sewin thread a-runnin all through your sorrow. You may be shamed of it, but durn me if it ain’t there. It will show like the white cotton chain in mean cassinette; brushin it under only hides it.

“And here’s a little more: no odds how good you is to young things or how kind you is in treatin ’em, when you sees a little long-legged lamb a-shakin its tail and a-dancing staggerinly under its mam—a-huntin for the tit onto its knees—your fingers *will* itch to seize that-there tail and fling the little anxious son of a mutton over the fence among the black-berry briars; not to hurt it, but just to disappoint it. Or say a little calf, a-buttin first under the cow’s forelegs and then the hind, with the point of its tongue stuck out, makin suckin motions, not yet old enough to know the bag-end of its mam from the hookin-end . . . don’t you want to kick it on the snout, hard enough to send it backwards—say fifteen foot—just to show it that buttin won’t allers fetch milk? Or a baby even, rubbin its heels a-past each other, a-rootin and a-sniffin after the breast, and the mam doin her best to git it out over the hem of her clothes: don’t you feel hungry to give it just one percussion-cap slap right onto the place what some day’ll fit a saddle or a sewin-chair, to show it what’s atwixt it and the grave; that it stands a pow’ful



chance not to be fed every time it's hungry or in a hurry?

“And agin: ain't there some grown-up babies what you meets, that the moment your eyes takes 'em in your toes itch to tetch their sterns just 'bout as softly as a mule kicks in playin—a histin kind of a tetch—for the way they wears their hair, hat, or watch-chain; the shape of their nose; the cut of their eye; or somethin of a like little nature.

“Just to show the idea. A strange fellow once't come into a doggery where I were busy a-raisin steam and had got it a few pounds above a bladder-bustin point. He took off his gloves slow and careful, a-lookin at me like I might smell bad. Then he flattened 'em onto the counter and laid 'em in the crown of his hat like he were packin shirts in a trunk.

“Then says he: ‘Baw-keepaw, ole Champagne Brandy, vintage of 'Thirty-Eight, if you please, aw.’

“He smelt it slow, a-lookin at hissself in the big lookin-glass ahind the counter, shook his head, and turned up his moustaches sorta like a goat hists its tail.

“Moustaches am pow'ful wholesome things, I expect, to them what has the stomach to wear 'em. Best buttermilk strainers on earth. All the scrimptions of butter lodges in the hair and, rubbed in, makes it grow like chicken dung does onions. Strains whiskey pow'ful good what has dead flies in it, and then you kin comb 'em off or let 'em stay 'cordin to your taste. Moustaches changes the taste of a kiss clear

over; makes it taste and smell like a mildewed saddle-blanket after it had been rid on a sore-back hoss three hundred miles in August, and increases your appetite for such things 'cordingly. I seed a blue-bird devil a feller once't all one spring a-tryin to git into his mouth to build a nest, and the durned fool were proud of the bird's preference, but wouldn't let it git in.

"Right then I thought, 'Well, durn your artificial no-count soul,' and my toes begun to tingle. He took four trials—a-pourin back and for'ard—afore he got his dram the right depth, a-lookin through the tumbler like he expected to see a minnow or a water-moccasin in it. Then he drunk it like it were castor oil, the infernal fool. Lordy criminy! How bad my toes were itchin now. He lit a seegar, cocked it to'ards one eye, and looked at me agin through the smoke while he shook his hat over onto one of his ears.

"Says I: 'Mornin, mister.'

"He never said a word, but turned and started for the door. When he got six foot nine inches distant—that's my best kickin range—the durned-aggravatin toe-itch overcome me and I let one of these here hoss-hide boots *go after him*. It immediately ketched up with the fork of his coat-tail and went outen my sight, most up to the straps. He went flyin outen the doggery door, over the hoss-rack.

"While he were in the air, he turned plumb round and lit—facin me—with a cocked Derringer a-starin me square in the face. I thought I seed the bullet in it lookin as big as a hen's egg. As I dodged, it plowed

a track across't the door jamb just as high as my eye-brows. I were one hundred and nineteen yards deep in the wheat-field when I heerd its mate bark, and he were a pow'ful, quick-motioned man with shootin irons.

“I were sorta fooled in the nature of that feller, that's a fact. The idea of Derringers and the milt to use 'em bein mixed up with as much durned-finicky fool as he showed never struck me at all; but I made my point on him—I cured my toe-itch.

“Well, I allers took the same complaint every time I seed ole Jedge Smarty, but I doesn't try to cure it on *him*, and so it just had to run its course unless I met somethin I could kick.

“Wirt Staples got him once't, bad. 'Stonished the ole bag of law a'most outen his dignity, damn if he didn't. And as Wirt took a share in what's to come of my narration about the consequences of foolin with other men's wives, I'll tell you how he 'stonished ole Smarty, and then you'll better understand me when I comes to tell you later how he helped to 'stonish ole Sheriff Dolton.

“Wirt had changed his grocery range; and the spirits at the new lick-log had more scrimmage-seed and raise-devil into it than the ole boiled drink he were used to, and three horns histed his tail and set his bristles 'bout as stiff as eight of the other dog-gery's juice would. So, when court set at nine o'clock, Wirt were 'bout as far ahead as cleaving, or half past that.

“The hollerin stage of the disease now struck him.

So he roared one good ear-quiverin roar and rose three foot inside the doggerly door, and lit nine more out in the mud, sploshin it all over the windows t'other side the street. He had a dried venison ham in one hand, and a ten-year-old he-nigger by its gallus-crossin in t'other. He waved first the nigger and then the venison over his head, steppin short and high like onto a blind horse, and lookin square atwixt his shoe-heels with his shoulders humped high up.

“Says he, ‘Hoo-whee,’ clear and loud as a tin horn. ‘Run under the hen! Here’s the bluetail hawk and he’s a-flyin low. The Devil’s grist-mill-dam’s broke; take to your canoes.’

“Then he roared a time or two, and looked up and down the street like a bull looks for t'other one when he thinks he heerd a beller. He rose onto his tiptoes and finished a good loud ‘Hoo-whee.’ As he dropped onto his heels agin, he yelled so hard his head shook and his long, black hair quivered agin. He then shook it outen his eyes, wipin the big drops of sweat offen his snout with his shirt-sleeve, still hangin on to the venison and the nigger.

“Says he: ‘Look out fur the engine when you hears it whistle; hit’s a-whistlin right now. *Nineteen* hundred an’ eighty pounds to the squar scrimption, by golly, an’ *eighty*-nine miles in the shake of a lamb’s tail. Perfectly clear me jis’ ten acres to do my gesturin on, you durned Jews, tape-sellers, gentiles, an’ jackasses. I’s e jis’ a morsel of the best man what ever laid a shadder onto this dirt—hit wilts

grass. My breath pisens skeeters, my yell breaks winders, an' my tromp gits earthquakes. I kin bust the bottom outen a still by blowin in at the worm. I kin addle a roomful of goose-aigs by peepin in at the keyhole, and *I kin spit a blister onto a washpot until the flies blow it*. Listen to me, oh you damn puny, panada-eatin citizens an' sojourners in this half-stocked town! I'se in earnest now.'

"Then he reared a few times agin and cut the pigeon-wing three foot high, finished off with 'bout half of a horn-pipe, keepin time above his head with the venison and the little son of midnight. He held 'em straight out at arm's-length, leaned way back and, lookin straight up at the sky, sung—'bout as loud as a cow bellers—one verse of the sixteen hundred and eighty-ninth hymn:

“ ‘The martins builds in boxes,  
 The foxes dens in holes,  
 The sarpints crawls in rockses,  
 The earth's the home of moles.  
 Cock-a-doodle-doo, hit's movin,  
 An' dram-time's come agin.’

“ ‘Yere's what kin jis' circumstantially flax out that-thar court-house—full to the chimney tops of bull-dogs, Bengal tigers, and poison-bitin things—with that-thar pussley-gutted, leather whiskey-jug of a jedge to leg for 'em. Come out yere, you false apostle of law! You cussed, dermatitis-nosed disciple of subpoenas, and let me give *you* a charge.

I'll bet high hit busts you plumb open from fork to forehead, you hairy, sulky, colicky, durned son of a slush-tub. Come out yere, oh, you coward's scare, you widder's nightmare, you poor man's heart-ache, you constable's god, you lawyer's king, you treasury's tapeworm, your wife's damn barrel of soap-grease softened with unbought whiskey.'

"Thinks I: *'That's it.* Now, Wirt, you'se drawed an ace card at last.' For the windows were histed and the court heerd every word.

"Wirt were boilin hot. Nobody to gainsay him had made him pied-eyed all over: he were plumb poison. So, after finishin his last narration aimed at Jedge Smarty, he took a vig'rous look at the young nigger what he still held squirmin and twistin—his face, what weren't eyes, glazed all over with tears and starch outen his nose—and says he: 'Go.' He flung it up'ards and, as it come down, it met one of Wirt's boots. Away it flew—spread like onto a flyin squirrel—smash through a watch-tinker's window, totin in broken sash and glass and bull's-eye watches and saucer watches and spoons and doll heads and clay pipes and fishin reels and some noise.

"A ole bald-headed cuss were a-sittin a-peepin into a ole watch after spiders, with a thing like a big, black wart coverin one eye, when the smashery come. And, the first thing he knowed, he were flat of his back, with a small, pow'fully-scared, ash-colored nigger a-straddle his neck . . . little brass wheels spinnin on the floor, and watches singin like rattle-snakes all round.

“I were a-peepin outen the ole doggery door, and thinks I: ‘Wirt, you’se drawed another ace, and if you held anything of a hand before, you has got a sure thing now. So better bet fast, ole feller, for I rather think the Jedge’ll call you pretty soon.’

“Wirt seed me, and of course thought of whiskey that moment. So he come over to lay on a little more kindlin wood. I’ll swear, to look at him, you couldn’t think for the life of you that he had over-bragged a single word. His britches were buttoned tight round his loins and stuffed ’bout half into his boots. His shirt bagged out above and were as white as milk; his sleeves were rolled up to his arm-pits and his collar were as wide open as a gate. The muscles on his arms moved about like rabbits under the skin, and onto his hips and thighs they played like the swell on the river. His skin were clear red and white, and his eyes a deep, sparklin, wicked blue, while a smile fluttered like a hummin-bird round his mouth all the while. When the State Fair offers a premium for *men* like they now does for jackasses, I means to enter Wirt Staples, and I’ll git it, if there’s five thousand entries.

“I seed ole Dolton comin waddlin outen the courthouse, with a paper in his hand and a big stick under his arm, lookin to’ards the doggery with his mouth pursed up and his brows drawed down. Says I: ‘Wirt, look there. There’s a ‘hereafter’ a-huntin you. Do you see it? Where’s your hoss?’ He took one wicked, blazin look and slipped into the street with his arms folded across’t his venison leg.

“Now Wirt were Wat Mastin’s cousin, *and knowed all about the rare ripe business*, and took sides with Wat strong. I’d showed him the Sheriff’s note to Mary, and he had it by heart. The crowd were now follerin Dolton to see the fun. When he got in about ten steps, says Wirt: ‘Stop right thar. Ef you don’t, thar’s *no calico or combs in Herrin’s store* ef I don’t make you feared of lightnin. I’ll stay wif you till *thar’s enough frost in hell to kill snapbeans.*’

When Wirt mentioned ‘snapbeans,’ I seed the Sheriff sorta start and git pale ahind the ears.

“‘Git into that-thar hog-pen, quick,’ a-pointin at the courthouse with the venison leg, ‘or I’ll split your head plumb to the swaller wif this yere buck’s laig, you durned ole scaley-heeled, bob-tail ole muley bull. I’ll spile your appertite for the grass in other men’s pastures.’

“‘Don’t talk so loud, Mister Staples. Hit discomberates the court. I hes no papers agin you. Jis’ keep quiet,’ says Dolton, edgin up slow, and two or three deputies sorta flankin.

“Wirt seed the signs. He just roared: ‘The lion’s loose. Shet your doors.’ I see his hair a-flyin as he sprung, and I heerd a sound like smashin a dry gourd. There were a rushin together of deputies and humans, and it looked like bees a-swarmin. Here come Wirt, mowin his way outen the crowd with his venison, and sprung onto his hoss. There lay Dolton, flat of his back, his belly pointin up like a big tater-hill, and eight or nine more in as many shapes lyin



all about; every durned one a-holdin his head exceptin Dolton, and he were plumb limber.

“Wirt had a pow’ful fine hoss, and he rid him round that crowd like a Comanche Injun or a circus, as fast as quarter-racin, just bustin his throat a-hollerin. Then he went for the courthouse, rid in at one door and out at t’other. As he went, he flung that mortal buck’s hind-leg at the Jedge’s head, sayin: ‘Thar’s a dried subpoena for you, you damn ole cow’s paunch.’

“As the venison come, it hit the table afore him and sent—ahead of it—the broken glass of a big inkstand and a half pint of ink into the face of the court. Then, glancin up, it took a pair of specks what had been reared back onto his head outen the window with it. OleSmarty has a mighty nice idea of when to duck his head, even if a rainstorm of ink am comin upwards into his face. Weren’t that monstrous nigh bein a case of contempt of court?”

## TRAPPING A SHERIFF

“When Dolton got his head coopered-up after that caving-in it got from that venison leg, so he could think up circumstances a little, he sent for me. You see, Jim Duncan, the ornery devil, foreswore hisself and now’s a perjured man; he told Dolton that I held his note to Mary, and Dolton were after it hot. Well, I took aboard enough wood to run me a few miles, and over I went . . . but first give the note to Wirt Staples to keep for fear the ole bulldog might *scare it outen me*.

“There lay Dolton on a low, one-hoss bedstead, with ’bout three wet towels tied round his head and cabbage leaves a-peepin out all round from under

'em. 'Bout half of a doctor's shop were sittin onto a table.

"There set the Sheriff's wife in a rocking chair. She were bony and pale. A drunk Injun could a-read a Dutch almanac thru her nose; and there were a new moon of indigo under her eyes. Away back into them, fifty foot or so, I seed her tear wells; their windlass were broke, the buckets in staves, and the waters all gone; and away still further back two lights shined, soft, like the stars above just afore their settin. Her waist were flat. And the finger cords on her hands were most as high, and looked as tight, and showed as clear thru the skin, as the strings of a fiddle. The hand itself were white, not like snow but like paint, and the forkèd blue veins made it look like a new map of the land of death.

"She were a-coughin with her hand on her heart, like she had no more spittle nor she had tears, and not much louder nor a cricket chirpin in a flute. Yet, in spite of all this, a sweet smile covered her features like a patch of winter sunshine on the slope of a mountain, and it stayed there as steady and bright as the color does to the rose. I expect that smile will go back up with her when she starts home, where it musta come from. She must once't been monstrous temptin to men to look at, and now she's loved by the angels, for the seal of their king is stamped in gold on her forehead. Her shoulder blades, as they showed through her dress, made me think they were wings a-sproutin for her flight to that comfort and peace she deserves so well. She's a-dealin with death now.

Her shroud's in the house, and some of the next grass will grow on her grave, and she's willin for the spring to come. *She* is ready . . . and *I* really wish she had started.

“As I look first at him, and then at her, I'd swore to a hereafter. Yes, two hereafters, by golly. One way up behind that-there black cloud with the white bindin, for such as her. The t'other hereafter needs no wings, nor legs either, to reach; when you soaks yourself in sin till you gits heavy enough, you just drops in. And way down in the south corner of it, there's a hole what the Devil prides hisself on, for it is just sixteen-thousand times hotter nor a weldin heat; and plumb into the center of it, without tetchin wall or rafter, some fine afternoon Dolton'll drop head-first and dive deeper nor a pound plumb bob kin fall in nine months. Wouldn't you like to be in a safe place to see him when he plouts in with a *whish* into that-there awful strong-smellin, melted mixture of select damnation? He'll sizzle like a wet cat flung into a kettle of boilin fat, and he'll slosh it up agin the walls so high that it will be a week tricklin down agin, and send the blazin drops so high that they'll light on earth and be mistakened for shootin stars.

“Well, Dolton riz up onto his elbow and says he, mighty soft-like, ‘Mister Lovingood, you holds a note of mine for *ten dollars*. I wants to pay it,’ a-holdin out a Bank of Tennessee ‘X’ and a-winkin prudence and silence at me from under the edge of a cabbage leaf monstrous strong.

“Says I: ‘Mister Dolton, I’se powerful sorry, but the fact is, I’se done traded your note.’

“‘Oh, dear me! I hopes not. Who did you trade hit to?’

“I looked straight into the center spot of the eye with the cabbage-leaf curtain, as innocent as a lamb, and said, slow and sorry-like: ‘WIRT STAPLES, Wat Mastin’s cousin.’

“He jerked his elbow from under him like springin the triggers of a bear-trap and fell back, pulled down the cabbage leaf low and says he, low atwixt his teeth to keep his wife from hearin it: ‘You’ve played hell.’

“‘Folks generally says that’s my trade,’ says I.

“‘What did you say your trade were, sir?’ said she, as soft and sweet as a well-played flute.

“‘Tradin notes of hand, mum,’ says I.

“‘Oh! I hopes you don’t take usury, sir.’

“‘No, mam,’ says I. ‘By no means. I takes venison for ’em.’

“‘Go to your room,’ growled the durned ole sore-headed bear. ‘I wants to talk to this person.’

“‘Damn him, he called me a ‘person.’

“After she left, says he: ‘You git that paper back and fetch hit to me; an’ ef you don’t, I’ll put you in jail ’bout that nigger meetin business, and thar you’ll *stay*. Does you understand me? I’ll give you venison.’ A-grittin his teeth and shakin his finger at me like a snake’s tongue. ‘Don’t you fool wif me, you infernal grasshopper of hell.’

“Says I, ‘I’ll try,’ a-backin for the door.

“Says he, ‘Stop!’ and I stopped, but with the door leaf held sorta atwixt us and all of my legs outside.

“‘You *stole* that paper from Missis Mastin. Now you git hit immediately, if not sooner, or you’ll lay in jail till—’

“‘There’s enough white frost in hell to bite snap-beans,’ says I, a-mockin his bull voice.

“He just reared back agin, and let his hands fall on the floor each side the cot as I shut the door ahind me. I heerd a hoss snort somewhere. He musta been sorta frustrated at me, for the cabbage leaves were wilted with sweat.

“I told Wirt Staples what had been said and done over to the Sheriff’s house. So him and me and his wife and Wat Mastin, a few days after held a real Know-Nothin convention to ourselves at Wirt’s house. We built a trap and baited it. Now, what do you reckon we used for bait? Nothin but *Mary Mastin herself*. And, by golly, we ketched Dolton the first pass.

“Wirt’s wife did the plannin, and if she ain’t smart for a woman, I ain’t a natural-born durned fool. She ain’t one of your she-cat women, allers spittin and groanin, and swellin their tails about their virtue. She never talks a word about it, no more’n if she didn’t have any; and she has as true a heart as ever beat agin a shift hem or a husband’s shirt. But she am full of fun, and I might add as purty as a hen canary, and I swear I don’t b’lieve the woman knows it. She come into our boat just cause Wirt were in

it, and she seed lots of fun a-plantin, and she wanted to be at the reapin of the crop.

“Well, the first thing did were to make her she-nigger overlay the road for Dolton, and tell him that Mary Mastin had searched my pockets when I were asleep and found a note of his’n, and that she wanted him to meet up with her next afternoon—just after dark—back of the blackberry patch, and he’d *git his note*. The cussed ole billy-goat just set in to lickin his lips and roachin his back like he were a-tastin the farewell of ole brandy. He riz in his stirrups and swore he’d be there if it rained red-hot railroad spikes and boilin tar.

“Wirt’s wife got early supper, a real circuit-rider’s supper where the woman of the house were a rich b’liever. There were chickens cut up and fried in butter; brown, white, flaky, light, hot biscuit, made with cream; scrambled eggs; yaller butter; fried ham, in slices as big as your hand; pickled beets and cowcubers; roastin ears, shaved down and fried; sweet taters, baked; a stack of buckwheat cakes as full of holes as a sifter, and a bowl of strained honey to fill the holes. I likes to sock a fork into the edge of one of them spongy things ’bout as big as a hat crown; put a spoonful of honey under it and a spoonful of honey atop of it; roll it up onto the fork like a big seegar, and start it down my throat end-first; and then just send nine more after it to hold it down. Next to spirits, they goes down the best. I kin taste ’em as low down as the bottom of my trousers’ pockets. For drinks, she had coffee

—hot, clear, and brown—and sweet milk as cold as a rich man’s heart. Onto the dresser set a sorta-lookin pot-bellied bottle—half full of peach brandy—watchin a tumbler, a spoon, and a sugar bowl. Oh! Mercy, mercy, George! For the sake of your soul’s tarnal welfare, don’t you as long as you live ever be tempted by money, or beauty, or smartness, or sweet huggin, or shockin-machine kisses to marry or come *nigh* marryin any gal atop this livin green earth, unless you has seed her yourself cook just such feedin as that were. Durnation, I kin taste it now, just as plain as I taste that-there fester-gut in that-there jug, and I swear I tastes *it* plain. I gets dog-hungry every time I sees Wirt’s wife, or even her side-saddle, or her frocks a-hangin on the clothesline.

“As we set down, the last glimmers of the sun crept thru the histed window, and fluttered on the white tablecloth and played a silver shine on her smooth black hair as she set at the head of the table, a-pourin out the coffee, with her sleeves pushed back tight on her white, round arm . . . her full, throbbin neck bare to the swell of her shoulders . . . and the steam of the coffee makin a movin veil afore her eyes as she slowly brushed it away with her left hand, a-smilin and a-flashin her talkin eyes lovingly at her handsome husband. I thought if I were a picture-maker, I could just take that-there supper and that-there woman down on clean white paper and make more men hungry and hot to marry a-lookin at it in one week nor ever ole Whitfield converted in his



whole life . . . backsliders, hypocrites, and all, I don't care a durn.

“Well, after the supper things were put away and the cows milked—I held the calves off by the tail to make myself useful—Wirt, and *me* by golly, and Wirt's wife, and Wat Mastin went over to the black-berry patch to initiate ole Dolton into the secret of home-made durnation. The moon were 'bout four days old; you could scarcely tell a man from a stump sixty yards off hand after night fairly set in; just the kind of a night for sly meetins or stealins.

“We'd scarcely got things fixed and ourselves hid separate when we heerd his ole hoss's hooves soundin on the hard road. That sound stopped, and directly we heerd a low partridge whistle, ‘*Whee-chee, whee-chee, bob white,*’ t'other side of the patch.

“‘Oh, the durned ole fool,’ said Wirt to his wife. ‘Partridges don't whistle *arter night.*’

“Says she, ‘The whip-poor-will would be better,’ and she whistled ‘*Whip-poor-will*’ in her throat somehow, so like that I thought I seed the spot under one's wings.

“Ole Dolton took it up and answered, comin nigher, ‘*Whip-poor-will.*’ Purty soon we seed him, loomin big up aginst the sky. He'd whistle and listen, and come a little, steppin soft as a cat.

“‘*Whee-chee, whee-chee, whee-chee,*’ whistled Miss Staples, so *low* and sweet you just could hear it. The tone of that whistle said ‘Come love, come love’ so plain I could scarcely sit still myself. I swear, I thought I heerd *his heart a-beatin.* I just knowed

mine woulda been a-poundin like the devil a-beatin tanbark if I'd been expectin what he were."

"Stop a moment, Mr. Lovingood," said an old bachelor—an old field schoolmaster—who was one of Sut's auditory. "Allow me to interrupt you, that I may more clearly comprehend your story. What was this Mr. Dolton in expectation of?"

Sut looked up at the overhanging elm boughs and said carelessly: "Oh, nothin but his note, I expect. Say, you there, mister a-b a-b. Is the fool-killer in the parts you come from doin his duty, or is he dead?"

"I never saw such a personage."

"I thought so, by the jinglin Jehosaphat."

The old gentleman turned to me and asked in a confidential whisper: "Is not that person slightly deranged?"

"Oh, no; not at all. He is only troubled at times with violent attacks of durned fool."

"He is laboring under one *now*, is he not?"

I nodded my head. "Go on, Sut."

"When ole Dolton got within ten steps, Missis Staples stepped for'ard outen the briars with her bonnet sorta over her face. He just give a low, gurglin sort of bray and sprung square at her. He grabbed her in his arms, a-dartin his ole pouched-out mouth at her face like a blue crane sends his bill after minnows—she a-dodgin so that every dip of his'n hit the bonnet.

"Says he: 'My dear Margaret, what makes you so skittish tonight. Don't be—'

“Wat Mastin had closed his paw onto the knot of his neck handkerchief and commenced a-twistin it hard. ‘You infernal ole scoundrel, I’s e ketched you at last. What’s you a-doin wif my wife?’

“‘Noth—nothin. Your—your wife got her coat-tail tangled in the briars and I were jis’ in a neighborly way *ontanglin her.*’

“‘Yas,’ says Wat. ‘And damn ef I don’t untangle you, in a neighborly way. Say the shortest and most searchin prayer you knows, for your season’s over.’

“Just then Missis Staples spoke up, like she were viciously mad: ‘Don’t you git *too smart*, Wat Mastin, ’bout your sorrel-top wife. I ain’t her by a frock-full. Jis’ go home to Mary and simmer down cool; you hev no business yere.’

“Wat pretended to be ’stonished. Says he, ‘I begs pardon,’ and stepped back from Dolton. The ole cuss were pow’fully ’stonished hissself, and glad all over too, for it spoilt Wat’s title to choke him to death.

“‘Who in the devil kin she be, and who were she ’spectin to meet?’ were now Dolton’s thoughts, and he edged up to her agin, when Wirt at one spring lit atwixt ’em.

“‘Susan—Dolton—by God, I wants to know what this means!’

“Dolton thought of the venison leg, and he said in a hound whimper, ‘I never tetched her,’ and broke to run. In two jumps, Wirt ketched him and fetched him back by his coat collar.

“Says Missis Staples: ‘Hand me the shawl you

promised me'—she said this sorta low and pitiful-like—'afore you desarts me.'

"'Shawl! Shawl!' shouted Wirt. 'Oh, you precious pair of damn furniture-takers.'

"I now stepped forth just so, 'bout seven foot. Says I, 'Mr. Dolton, I has fetched you that note you writ to Mary Mastin,' in a secret sort of whisper.

"'Never mine hit now, Mister Lovingood, never mine. I'se pow'fully busy jis' now. Some other time'll do.'

"Says I: 'You must take it now. You talked of juggin me 'bout the durned thing. Here it is.' I reached it for'ard and Wat grabbed it. Ole Dolton groaned.

"Says Wat, a-rubbin it under Dolton's snout: 'That's *testimony* onto you, you damn ole rascal!

"'Yas,' says Wirt, a-pointin to Susan, 'and thar stands one hundred and twenty pounds *more testimony*.'

"She pretended to cry and she said: 'Oh, Mister Dolton, what made you use me so?'

"'I wish I may drop dead ef ever I used you at all,' said Dolton right quick.

"'You has ruined me, Mister Dolton.'

"'I never,' said Dolton.

"'And you never fetched me no—no—sh-sh-awl after all. Hu, hu, hu,' and she wiped her eyes.

"'I don't owe you no shawl. Wish I may drop dead in a minute if I does.'

"'Hu, hu, hu,' says she. 'You never give me a thing yet, you dratted stingy hog you.'

"I swear he were the most befoozled man I ever saw. He rubbed his eyes with his fists and batted 'em a few times; then he looked wide open, owl-fashion, first at one and then at t'other, like he'd been dreamin a awful nightmare and weren't sure whether he were awake yet . . . Susan still a-cryin, and a-talkin 'bout havin his hearts blood; tellin Missis Dolton; killin herself; and I dunno what all. A grand thought now struck him, and he just roared: 'I is the High Sheriff of this county, and I *commands the peace!*'

"Weren't that a smashin lick?"

"Says Wirt: 'Strip, High Sheriff of this county. I'se gwine to hang you dorg-fashion. Wat, hand me that rope.'

"The blusterin ole bellwether just wilted down and set in to strippin slow, and a-beggin, and a-promisin, and a-makin money offers—we helpin him to do his shuckin. I found a pair of women's shoes, his buckskin gloves, and a smellin bottle in his coat pocket. Missis Staples slipped off to the house when the strippin begun, and I don't blame her.

"Well, when we got off all but his shirt and shoes, Wirt slipped the noose in one end of the rope over Dolton's head, and there were tied to t'other end a ball of tow soaked in turpentine—as big as a half bushel—without his seein it. I fetched a pair of wild, vig'rous, scared tom-cats in each end of a bag, with leather collars and a big fish-hook sewed to each collar by a foot of strap. While Wirt were fixin the noose so as not to choke, I slipped up ahind Dolton and hooked a cat to each corner of his shirt-tail,

a-holdin 'em off; he were so tremblin and scared, he didn't feel me.

"While I were doin this, Wat struck a match and lit the turpentine, sayin: 'I means to toast you es you swings, you damn malefactory!'

"I just craned for'ard, and whispered into Dolton's ear: 'Bulge square for the briars—they won't foller in there.'

"By the great golly, when he heerd that sentiment, coupled as it were with Wat's toastin idea, he just made a real hoss lunge *and I dropped the cats*. One took up his bare back, a-haulin up after him the north corner of the shirt-tail underhanded; and t'other one took down his thigh, a-haulin the south corner of the shirt-tail after him. They pulled agin each other like onto two wild steers in a yaller-jacket's nest. The cat goin up-hill made the ole feller tote that side and shoulder sorta ahead of t'other, like he were leanin from a hot fire. The cat goin down-hill made him lift that leg like a spring-halted hoss, only a heap faster, while the briars hookin him everywhere made him dodge all over every way at once't.

"From his motions, he mighta been possessed with the devil pow'fully. You never seed such lopsided, high-up, low-down, windin-about, jerkin, uneven runnin in the world; but every durned step of it were straight away from where we were, square thru the briar patch. The turpentine lit up a bright road ahind him covered with broke-down and tore-up briars, and his white shirt and the cats' eyes resembled a flag of truce covered with lightnin-bugs. I

think I never seed as many cats' eyes in as many places afore, to be no more cats than there were. Tails, too, were rather numerous and sorta swelled, and claws a-plenty. The noise he made sounded just like a two-hoss mowin-machine—drove by chain-lightnin—a-cuttin through a dry canebrake on a big bet. And there were with the noise a undercurrent of sound like tearin starched muslin; this, I expect, were the briars and cats a-breakin holds.

“‘Ha, ha!’ says Wirt. ‘Wouldn’t he be great in a new country to open out roads, or tote news of the comin of the Injuns? Hell! How he travels! Listen, jis’ listen. Don’t he make things roar?’

“I run to Dolton’s hoss and mounted, and took thru to Wat’s afore Dolton got round that far. I jumped off in the thicket and crept up to the road fornent Wat’s door to see him tear a-past. Here he come! I seed his light a-shinin long afore I seed him, way above the trees; *it* weren’t hid under no bushel. Wirt were openin on his trail, makin the mountains ring with yells and dreadful threats. Dolton toted his light pow’ful irregular; sometimes it were trailin on the earth, and sometimes it weren’t by ’bout fifteen feet. It were alightin on and a-flyin off the fence on both sides of the lane, and you coulda seed to a-picked strawberries, and it roared like a storm. The motions of that light, I reckon, were governed by the workin of the cats.

“I seed the active bulge of one cat under his shirt, a-tryin its durndest to pull its corner of the shirt-tail up under the collar at the back of his

neck. The t'other cat were a-dividin its time—'bout equal—a-jumpin at the weeds and a-tryin to run further down his big leg. And they swapped work now and then. The downhill cat would go up under the shirt, and a tearin big fight immediately follered, endin in t'other cat comin down a spell.

“While they were both up there atwixt Dolton and his shirt, he looked pow'ful hump-backed—and Lordamighty!—how low he'd run then. Sweet Margery! Just think of two aggravated, unsanctified he-cats at earnest war, makin your bare back their battleground, and depending on *your hide for all their foot-holds*. I swear, it's a real red-pepper, wakening idea just to think of . . . without a cat in a mile—gee-whillikins! The eyes and tails were dreadful to behold, and their groanin and spittin beat cats when they'se courtin worse'n they does city folks at the same work.

“Mary Mastin had heerd the noise and seed the light, so she come to the gate just as the ole excited phenomenon tore a-past. She fetched a scream:

“‘Dear bless us! What's all that? Oh, Mammy, run out yere quick, and see the Devil a-chasin whip-poor-wills.’

“When she said that, Dolton thought of the whip-poor-will *he'd* heard at the briar-patch and b'lieved Mary were mixed up with the thing, and he sobbed out: ‘Oh, you damn 'ceitful bitch! This is your work.’

“‘Oh, Mammy, Mammy. That's poor Mister Dolton's voice as sure as you are borned! The poor man's dead, and that's him. Ole Smutty's after with a torch



of hell-fire. I does wonder what he's been doing?" She said this sorta whiffin.

"I put my hands round my mouth, and bellered thru 'em in the most doleful way you ever heerd, from the thicket: 'Margaret Mastin, the lawful wife of Watson Mastin, the blacksmith. Prepare to go down where there's no sly courtin, nor rare ripe garden-seed. Margaret, there's wrath to come. Your crop's laid by. Prepare!' And I groaned.

"She arched her neck, and took a wild, blazin look over at the thicket like she were studyin 'bout somethin, and says she, short and vig'rous, 'Durn my soul ef I go a step,' and just busted through the standin corn like a runaway hoss. Thinks I, that-there blade will never git religion from a scare.

"The ole woman got to the door just in time to hear the last words and the sound Mary made a-tearin thru the corn. She were a-pinnin up her frock-bosom.

"Says I, doleful: 'Peggy Jane, my b'loved wife. I'se in hell, a-sufferin for robbin the peddler. *You made me do it!*'

"Says she: 'Sammy, *I didn't*. I only tole you we needed his truck.'

"Says I: 'Fetch me some water, for my tongue's parched with fervent heat.'

"Says she: 'There's a spring back of the ridge thar.' That were a cussed lie.

"Says I: 'I'm a-comin for a gourd.'

"Says she: 'There's nary gourd here.' Damn if

she didn't hist all her coats half a foot above her knees, and took through the corn too.

"I went into the cabin, drew one of Dolton's gloves onto little Rare Ripe's head for a nightcap. Its name were printed with ink round the wrist; this went round its forehead. T'other glove I put in Wat's overcoat pocket—a-hangin on the wall—mounted the hoss, and took across't the ridge to head off Dolton at the ferry.

"The ferryman's ole whippoorwill wife heerd the noise of his comin, and seed the light shinin from the winder. So she bounced outen bed in her shift-tail and run to the door.

"Says she: 'Laws a mercy! Ole man, git up quick and set 'em over. Make haste, or they'll swim. The big show's a-comin in a hurry, for yere's the rhionoserenus a'ready, and lots of monkeys close't ahind him, and the big Barnum Bengal light arter them. Good Lordy! What tails! Gracious me, what a noise! Merciful heavens, what a belly! and—Oh, lord a' mercy on my poor soul! Sakes alive!'

"She pronounced these last words like she were pow'ful shamed, and I expect the fool were, for she pulled up what she took to be her apron and covered her face, and shut the door with a snap and left herself *on the outside*.

"I hollered, 'Higher . . . your forehead ain't covered yet.' She run round the chimney outen sight, still holdin up her apron.

"Dolton flew a-past, shot down the bank, run thru the ferryboat and plouted off the far end head-

first into the river. When he got fairly to swimmin, it were comfortin and nice to look at from a high point. He swum breast-high for t'other bank, and the durned cats, contrary to the last, were swimmin for *this* bank with their tails straight up and leanin from each other. This stretched his shirt-tail flat of the water, and the light were a-bouncin over the waves on Dolton's wake, edgin 'em all with gold. He looked like a big, high-pressure, snappin turtle with a dark head, white shell, and the cats answered for a pair of active, brindle, hind-legs.

"The river were a-troubled pow'ful—slushin high up the banks and a-slappin agin the rake of the ferryboat—for he were a-stirrin it plumb to the mud. Every now and then he'd snort like a hoss and look back over his shoulder; his eyes were as big as a bull's, and blazed like onto two furnace doors. That mind of his'n musta been pow'ful active just 'bout then: cats—ropes—mad husbands—and a awful hell predominatin, among loose thoughts of women and their uncertainty, as he rose t'other bank with the limber cats danglin round his legs.

"I hollered over: 'Say, there, rare ripe cat attachments am worse in law nor certioraris, ain't they?'"

"He never said a word, but crawled tired-like into the paw-paw thicket . . . drowned cats, rope, wet tow, and all. When he got home, he told his wife a doleful tale. How the Democrats, just cause he wouldn't tell the Know-Nothings' secret, had tied him to a wild hoss's tail, turned it loose, and then

started a passenger engine onto his trail to scare the hoss. He knowed they did, for he seed the head-light close't after him the whole way and heerd the *tchish, tchish-shew!* of the steam. Cats, George, by golly! Nothin but cats! What a thunderin liar that man must be; but lyn's borned with some folks just like squint-eyes.

"While his wife were oilin of his torn hide and a-checkerin his back with stripes of court plaster, she asked him how so much *fur* come to be stickin to his wounds. He said the hoss run through a hatter's shop with him. Weren't that right-down shifty?"

"Then says she: 'Your shut and you bof smell sorta catty, strong-like.'

"When she hinted at cats, he reared up on end, lookin wild round the room. Says he: 'Whar's any cats?'

"George, them-there tom-cats must a-scratched into his conscience afore they died, for he joined church just as soon as he got able to walk there. It's strange, ain't it? In ole times, I heerd tell they had cities where fellers run to and were safe after they'd done some pow'ful devilment."

"Yes, Sut. Cities of refuge."

"Well, durn my rags if gittin of religion ain't the city of refuge nowadays. You just let a rascal git hisself ketched and mauled for his damn meanness, and he joins church just as soon as he kin stretch his face long enough to fill the pious standard, and that's eighteen inches for lean people and fourteen for fat ones. I has a city of refuge myself,

what I allers keeps along with me," and Sut looked down proudly and fondly at his legs.

"I forgot to mention: a day or two after the cat-race I met up with Wat Mastin at the store. He motioned me round back of the house. Says he: 'Sut, hell's to pay at our house. Mary's been hid out somewhar till this mornin. She come up dragged an' hungry, an' won't say a durned word. An' ole Missis McKildrin's plumb gone.'

"Says I: 'Ain't you glad?'

"He stretched his mouth into the widest smile you ever seed, and, slapping me on the back, says he: 'I *is*, by golly!' Then he looked serious with his head down. Says he: 'Dolton must be a pow'ful parseverin man when he sets his head for anythin.'

"Says I: 'Why?'

"'Cause don't you think—with them cats, and that skeer, and that hurtin, and us arter 'im to hang 'im as he thought—he took time to stop and *see Mary!*'

"'Oh, no!'

"'Yes, he did, for I found one of his gloves in my overcoat pocket, and he'd given t'other one to the baby for a nightcap.'

"George, Wat Mastin has a right thick streak of durned fool in him, sure as you are borned.

"'Bout three days after seein Wat, I meets up with Mary on the road. She were swingin her sun-bonnet afore her by the strings, walkin fast and lookin down at the ground.

"Says I: 'Mornin, Missis Mastin. I has lost two

pow'ful-fine cats. Has you seed anything of 'em round here?"

"Says she, and her eyes blazed: 'I hope they are in hell, whar you ought to be, you infunnel mischief-maker you!"

"The woman certainly has got somethin agin me. I wonders what it kin be?"

PART SIX

**SUT  
TAKES ON  
THE WHOLE WORLD**





## MRS. YARDLEY'S QUILTING

"That's been one durned nasty, muddy job, and I is just glad enough to take a horn or two on the strength of it."

"What have you been doing, Sut?"

"Helpin to salt ole Missis Yardley down."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Fixin her for rottin comfortably . . . coverin her up with soil to keep the buzzards from cheatin the worms."

"Oh, you have been helping to bury a woman."

"That's it, by golly! Now why the devil can't I explain myself like you? I ladles out my words at random like a calf kickin at yaller-jackets; you

just rolls 'em out to the point like a feller a-layin bricks—every one fits. How is it that bricks fit so close't anyhow? Rocks won't nigh do it."

"Becaze they's all of a size," ventured a man with a wen over his eye.

"The devil you say, honey-head! Ain't reapin-machines of a size? I'd like to see two of 'em fit close't. You wait until you sprouts t'other horn afore you ventures to explain mixed questions. George, did you know ole Missis Yardley?"

"No."

"Well, she were a curious woman in her way, and she wore shiny specks. Now just listen: whenever you see a ole woman ahind a pair of *shiny* specks, you keep your eye skinned. They am dang'rous in the extreme. There is just no knowin what they can do. I had one a-straddle of me once't for kissin her gal. She went for my hair, and she went for my skin, until I thought she meant to kill me and woulda done it if my hollerin hadn't fetched ole Dave Jordan, a *bachelor*, to my aid. He, like a durned fool, ketched her by the leg and drug her back'ards offen me. She just covered him, and I run, by golly! The next time I seed him, he were bald-headed, and his face looked like he'd been a-fightin wildcats.

"Ole Missis Yardley were a great noticer of little things that nobody else ever seed. She'd say, right in the middle of somebody's serious talk:

"'Law sakes! Thar goes that yaller slut of a hen, a-flingin straws over her shoulder. She's arter settin

now and hain't laid but seven aigs. I'll disappoint *her*, see ef I don't. I'll put a punkin in her nest an' a feather in her nose. An' bless my soul! Jis' look at that cow wif the wilted horn, a-flingin up dirt and a-smellin the place whar it come from, wif the real, gинуine stillworm twist in her tail, too. What upon the face of the earth can she be arter now, the ole fool? Watch her, Sally. An' sakes alive, jis' look at that ole sow. She's a-gwine in a fast trot wif her empty bag a-flappin agin her sides. Thar, she hes stopped and's a-listenin! Mercy on us, what a long, earnest grunt she give. Hit come from way back of her kidneys. Thar she goes agin. She's arter no good; sich kerryin-on means no good.'

"And so she would gabble, no odds who were a-listenin. She looked like she might have been made at first 'bout four foot long and the common thickness of women when they's themselves . . . then had her hair tied to a stump, a pair of steers hitched to her heels, and then stretched out almost two foot more—most of the stretchin comin outen her legs and neck. Her stockings, a-hangin on the clothes-line to dry, looked like a pair of sabre-scabbards; and her neck looked like a dry beef shank smoked, and might been nigh onto as tough. I never felt it myself, I didn't; I just jedges by looks.

"Her daughter Sal were built at first 'bout the length of her mam, but were never stretched any by a pair of steers; and she were fat enough to kill: she were taller lyin down than she were a-standin up. It were her who give me the 'hump shoulder.' Just look

at me. Ain't I got a tetch of the dromedary back there bad? Ain't I humpy? Well, a-stoopin to kiss that squatty lard-stand of a gal is what done it to me. She were the fairest-lookin gal I ever seed. She allers wore thick woolen stockins 'bout six inches too long for her leg; they rolled down over her garters, lookin like a pair of life-preservers up there. I tell you she were a tearin gal anyhow. Loved kissin, wrasslin, and boiled cabbage; hated tight clothes, hot weather, and circuit riders. B'lieved strong in married folks' ways, cradles, and the remission of sins; didn't believe in corsets, fleas, pianos, nor the fashion plates."

"What caused the death of Mrs. Yardley, Sut?"

"Nothin, only her heart stopped beatin 'bout losin a nine-diamond quilt. True, she got a scared hoss to run over her, but she'd a-got over that if a quilt hadn't been mixed up in the catastrophe. You see, quilts were one of her special gifts; she run strong on the bed-cover question. Irish chain, Star of Texas, sunflower, nine-diamond, saw-teeth, checker-board, and shell quilts; blue and white, and yaller and black coverlets and calico-comforts reigned triumphant 'bout her house. They were packed in drawers; layin in shelves full; were hung four-double on lines in the loft; packed in chests; piled on chairs; and were everywhere, even onto the beds; and were changed every bed-makin.

"She told everybody she could git to listen to it that she meant to give every durned one of 'em to Sal when she got married. Oh, lordy! What as fat a gal as Sal Yardley could ever do with half of 'em, and

sleepin with a husband at that, is more nor I ever could see through. Just think of her under twenty layers of quilts in July, and you in there too. Gee-whillikins, George! Look how I is sweatin now, and this is December. I'd 'bout as lief be shut up in a steam boiler with a three-hundred-pound bag of lard as to make a business of sleepin with that gal—it would kill a glass-blower.

“Well, to come to the serious part of this conversation: that is, how the old quilt-machine and coverlet-loom come to stop operations on this earth. She had narrated it through the neighborhood that next Saturday she'd give a quiltin—three quilts and one comfort to tie. ‘Gobblers, fiddles, gals, and whiskey’ were the words she sent to the men-folk, and more touchin or wakenin words never dropped offen a woman's tongue. She said to the gals: ‘Sweet toddy, huggin, dancin, an' huggers in abundance.’ Them words struck the gals right in the pit of the stomach and spread a ticklin sensation both ways, until they scratched their heads with one hand and their heels with t'other.”

“Everybody—he and she—what were baptized believers in the righteousness of quiltins were there. It just so happened that everybody in them parts, from fifteen summers to fifty winters, were unanimous b'lievers. Strange, weren't it? It were the biggest quiltin ever Missis Yardley held, and she had held hundreds. Everybody were there except the constable and the circuit rider, two damn easily-spared persons. The numbers nigh onto even, too;

just a few more boys nor gals. That made it more excitin, for it give the gals a chance to kick and squeal a little without runnin any risk of not gittin kissed at all; and it give reasonable grounds for a few scrimmages among the he's. Now as kissin and fightin am the pepper and salt of all social gatherings, so it were more especially with those of ours. As I swung my eyes over the crowd, George, I thought quiltins, managed in a moral and sensible way, truly am good things—good for free drinkin, good for free eatin, good for free huggin, good for free dancin, good for free fightin, and goodest of all for populatin a country fast.

“There am a far-seein wisdom in quiltins if they has proper trimmins: ‘vittles, fiddles, and spirits in abundance.’ One wholesome quiltin am worth three ole prayer-meetins on the population point, particularly if it's held in the dark of the moon and runs into the night a few hours, and April or May am the time chosen. The moon don't suit quiltins where everybody is well acquainted and already far along in courtin. She does help pow'ful to begin a courtin match underway, but when it draws nigh onto a head nobody wants a moon but the ole mammys.

“The mornin come: still, soft, sunshiny. Cocks crowin, hens singin, birds chirpin, turkeys gobblin—just the day to sun quilts, kick, kiss, squeal, and make love.

“All the plow-lines and clothes-lines were stretched to every post and tree. Quilts prevailed. Durn my gizzard if two acres round that-there house weren't

just one solid quilt, all out a-sunnin and to be seed. They dazzled the eyes, scared the hosses, give women the heart-burn, and predominated.

“To’ards sundown, the he’s begun to drop in. Earnest needle-drivin commenced to lose ground; threads broke often; thimbles got lost; and quilts needed another roll. Gigglin, winkin, whisperin, smoothin of hair, and gals a-ticklin one another were a-gainin every inch of ground what the needles lost.

“Did you ever notice, George, at all social gatherins, when the he’s begin to gather, that the young she’s begin to tickle one another and the ole maids swell their tails, roach up their backs, sharpen their nails onto the bed-posts and door-jambes, and spit and groan sorta like cats a-courtin? Does it mean *real* wrath, or is it a dare to the he’s, sorta covered up with the outside signs of danger?

“I honestly b’lieve that the young shes’ ticklin means: ‘Come and take this job offen our hands.’ But that swellin I just don’t understand. Does you? It looks scary, and I never tetch one of ’em when they am in the swellin way.

“I may be mistakened ’bout the ticklin business too. It may be done like a feller chaws poplar bark when he ain’t got any terbacker, a sorta better nor none make-shift. I does know one thing to a certainty: that is, when the he’s take hold, the ticklin quits. And if you gits one of the ole maids out to herself, then she subsides and is the smoothest, sleekest, soft thing you ever seed, and damn if you can’t hear her purr, just as plain!

“But then, George, gals and ole maids ain’t the things to fool time away on. It’s widders, by golly, what am the real sensible, steady-goin, never-scarin, never-kickin, willin, spirited, smooth pacers. They come close’t up to the hoss-block, standin still with their purty, silky ears playin and the neck-veins a-throbbin, and waits for the word—which of course you gives after you finds your feet well in the stirrup—and away they moves like a cradle on cushioned rockers, or a spring buggy ruinnin in damp sand. A tetch of the bridle and they knows you want ’em to turn, and they does it as willin as if the idea were their own. I be dod-rabbitted if a man can’t ’propriate happiness by the skinful if he is in contact with somebody’s widder and is smart.

“Give me a willin widder the earth over: what they don’t know ain’t worth learnin. They has all been to Jamaicy and learnt how sugar’s made, and knows how to sweeten with it. And, by golly, they is always ready to use it. All you has to do is to find the spoon, and then drink comfort till you’re blind. Next to good spirits and my legs, I likes a twenty-five-year-old widder—with round ankles and bright eyes—honestly and squarely lookin into yourn, and sayin as plainly as a partridge says ‘Bob White’: ‘Don’t be afraid of me; I has been there; you know if you has any sense; and there’s no use in any humbug, ole feller—come ahead!’

“If you understands widder nature, they can save you a power of trouble, uncertainty, and time; and if you is enterprisin, you gits monstrous well-paid



for it. The very sound of their little shoe-heels speak full trainin and has a knowin click as they tap the floor. And the rustle of their dress says: 'I dare you to ask me.'

"When you has made up your mind to court one, just go at it like it were a job of rail-maulin. Wear yer workin clothes; use yer common everyday motions and words; and, above all, fling away your cinnamon-oil vial and burn all your love songs. No use in tryin to fool 'em, for they sees plumb through you a durned sight plainer than they does through their veils. No use in a pasted shirt; she's been there. No use in borrowin a cavortin fat hoss; she's been there. No use in hair-dye; she's been there. No use in cloves to kill whiskey breath; she's been there. No use in buyin closed curtains for your bed, for she has been there. Widders am a special means, George, for ripenin green men, killin off weak ones, and makin 'ternally happy the sound ones.

"Well, as I said afore, I flew the track and got onto the widders. The fellers begun to ride up and walk up, sorta slow, like they weren't in a hurry—the durned 'ceitful rascals—hitchin their critters to anything they could find. One red-combed, long-spurred, Dominecker feller from town—in a red and white gridiron jacket and patent-leather gaiters—hitched his hoss, a wild, scary, wall-eyed devil, inside the yard palings to a cherry-tree limb.

"Thinks I: 'That hoss has a scare into him big enough to run into town, and perhaps beyond it, if I kin only tetch it off.' So I set into thinkin.

“One end of a long clothes-line, with nine-diamond quilts onto it, were tied to the same cherry tree that the hoss were. I took my knife and socked it through every quilt, ’bout the middle and just below the rope, and tied them there with bark so they couldn’t slip. Then I went to the back-end and untied the clothes-line from the post, knottin in a hoe-handle by the middle to keep the quilts from slippin off if my bark strings failed, and laid it on the ground. Then I went to the t’other end; there were ’bout ten foot to spare a-lyin on the ground after tyin to the tree. I took it atwixt Wall-eye’s hind legs and tied it fast to both stirrups; and then cut the cherry-tree limb betwixt his bridle and the tree almost off.

“Now, mind you, there were two or three other ropes full of quilts atween me and the house, so I were purty well hid from there. I just tore off a paling from the fence and took it in both hands; and, after raisin it way up yonder, I fetched it down as hard as I could flat-sided to’ard the ground, and it accidentally happened to hit Wall-eye ’bout nine inches ahead of the root of his tail. It landed so hard that it made my hands tingle, and then busted into splinters.

“The first thing I did were to feel of myself on the same spot where it had hit the hoss. I couldn’t help doin it to save my life, and I swear I felt some of Wall-eye’s sensation, just as plain. The first thing he did were to tear down the limb with a twenty-foot jump, his head to’ards the house. Thinks I: ‘Now you have done it, you durned wall-eyed fool!’ Tearin

down that limb were the beginnin of all the trouble, and the hoss did it hisself. My conscience felt clear as a mountain spring, and I were in a frame of mind to observe things as they happened. And they soon began to happen purty close't after one another right then and there and thereabouts clean onto town, through it, and still were a-happenin in the woods beyond there nigh onto eleven miles from ole man Yardley's gate, and four beyond town.

"The first line of quilts he tried to jump, but broke it down. The next one he ran under. The rope ketched onto the horn of the saddle, broke at both ends, and went along with the hoss, the cherry-tree limb, and the first line of quilts what I had providentially tied fast to the rope. That's what I calls foresight, George.

"Right fornent the front door he come in contact with ole Missis Yardley herself and another ole woman. They were a-holdin a nine-diamond quilt spread out, a-zaminin it and a-praisin its perfections. The durned unmannerly, wall-eyed fool run plumb over Missis Yardley from ahind, stomped one hind foot through the quilt, takin it along and a-kickin until he made its corners snap like a whip. The gals screamed, the men hollered 'Whoa!', and the ole woman were toted into the house limber as a wet string. And every word she said were: 'Oh, my precious nine-diamond quilt!'

"Wall-eye busted through the palings and Dominecker seed him, made a mortal rush for his bits. Were too late for 'em, but in good time for the strings of flyin quilts, got tangled among 'em, and the grid-

iron jacket patron were lost to my sight among star and Irish chain quilts. He went from that quiltin at the rate of thirty miles to the hour. Nothin left on the lot of the whole concern but a nine-boiler hat, a pair of gloves, and the jack of hearts.

“What a unmannerly sudden way of leavin places some folks have got, anyhow.

“Thinks I: ‘Well, that fool hoss tearin down that cherry-tree limb has done some good, anyhow. It has put the ole woman outen the way for the balance of the quiltin, and took Dominecker outen the way and outen danger, for that gridiron jacket would a-bred a scab on his nose afore midnight; it were morally bound to do it.’

“Two months after’ards, I tracked the route that hoss took in his calamitous scare by quilt rags, tufts of cotton, bunches of hair—human and hoss—and scraps of a gridiron jacket stickin onto the bushes. And plumb at the end of it, where all signs give out, I found a piece of watch chain and a hoss’s head. The places what knowed Dominecker knowed him no more.

“Well, after they’d took the ole woman upstairs and camphored her to sleep, things begun to work again. The widders broke the ice; and, after a little gigglin, gobblin, and gabblin, the kissin begun.

“*Smack!* ‘Thar, now.’ A widder said that.

“*Pop!* ‘Oh, don’t!’

“*Pfip!* ‘Oh, you quit!’

“*Plosh!* ‘Go ’way, you awk’ard critter, you kissed me in the eye!’ Another widder said that.

“*Bop!* ‘Now you are satisfied, I reckon, big mouth!’

"*Vip!* 'That ain't fair!"

"*Spat!* 'Oh, lordy! May, come pull Bill away. He's a-tanglin my hair.'

"*Thut!* 'I jist d-a-r-e you to do that agin!' A widder said that, too.

"It sounded all round that room like poppin corn in a hot skillet, and were pow'ful suggestive.

"It kept on until I be durned if *my* bristles didn't begin to rise, and somethin like a cold buckshot would run down the marrow in my backbone 'bout every ten seconds, and then run up again tolerable hot. I kept a-swallerin with nothin to swaller, and my face felt swelled; and yet I were feared to make a bulge. Thinks I: 'I'll ketch one out to herself directly, and then I guess we'll rassle.'

"Purty soon Sal Yardley started for the smoke-house; so I just give my head a few short shakes, let down one of my wings a-trailin, and circled round her with a side-twist in my neck, steppin sidewise and a-fetchin up my hindmost foot with a sorta jerkin slide at every step.

"Says I: 'Too coo-took a-too.'

"She understood it and stopped, sorta spreadin her shoulders. And just as I had pouched out my mouth and were a-reachin for'ard with it for the article itself, somethin interfered with me, it did.

"George, were you ever onto your hands and knees, and let a hell-tearin, big, mad ram with a ten-yard run butt you earnestly—just once't—right square onto the point of your backbone?"

"No, you fool. Why do you ask?"

“Cause I wanted to know if you could have a realizin notion of my shock. It’s scarcely worthwhile to try to make you understand the case by words only, unless you have been tetched in that way. Great golly! The first thing I felt, I took it to be a back-action earthquake. And the first thing I seed were my chaw of terbacker a-flyin over Sal’s head like a scared bat. My mouth were pouched out—ready for the article itself, you know—and it went outen the round hole like the wad outen a popgun—*thug!* And the first thing I knowed, I were a-flyin over Sal’s head, too, and a-gainin on the chaw of terbacker fast. I were straightened out straight—toes hindmost, middle fingernails foremost—and the first thing I heerd were: ‘You damn Shanghai!’

“Great Jerus-a-lam! I lit onto my all-fours just in time to butt the yardgate offen its hinges and scare loose some more hosses—kept on in a four-footed gallop clean across’t the lane afore I could straighten up, and here I ketched up with my chaw of terbacker stickin flat agin a fence-rail. I had got so good a start that I thought it a pity to spoil it, so I just jumped the fence and took through the orchard. I tell you I dusted these-here clothes, for I thought it were after me.

“After runnin a spell, I ventured to feel round back there for some signs of what had happened to me. George, after two pow’ful-hard tugs I pulled out the vamp and sole of one of ole man Yardley’s big brogans, what he had lost among my coat-tails. Dreadful! Dreadful! After I got it away from there, my

flesh went fast asleep from above my kidneys to my knees. About now, for the first time, the idea struck me what it were that had interfered with me and lost me the kiss. It were ole Yardley had kicked me. I walked for a month like I were straddlin a thorn hedge. Such a shock, at such a time and on such a place—just think of it! It am tremenjus, ain't it? The place feels numb right now."

"Well, Sut, how did the quilting come out?"

"How the hell do you expect me to know? I weren't there any more."

## SUT LOVINGOOD'S SERMON

“I say, George, every critter what has ever seed me —if they has sense enough to hide from a comin calamity or run from a musket—just knows five great facts in my case as well as they knows the road to their mouths. *Firstly*, that I ain’t got nary a soul; nothin but a whiskey-proof gizzard sorta like the worst half of a ole pair of saddle-bags. *Secondly*, that I’s e too durned a fool to come even under military law. *Thirdly*, that I has the longest pair of legs ever hung to any carcass, exceptin only of a grand-daddy spider, and kin beat *him* a-usin of ’em just as bad as a scared dog kin beat a crippled mud-turtle. *Fourthly*, that I kin chamber more cork-screw, kill-



devil whiskey, and stay on end, than anything exceptin only a broad-bottomed churn. *Fivety*, and lastly, kin git into more durned misfortunate, scary scrapes than anybody, and then outrun them faster, by golly, nor anybody.

“Well now, if these five, pow’ful-strong points of character don’t give me the right to preach if I wants to, I would like to know where some preachers got *their* papers from. I means to wade into the business as deep as one sermon, on the free will plan anyhow, leavin out the singin and totin round the hat. Listen to me, for I’s e in earnest ’bout this thing. If you has a pair of burnin-glass specks and it am a clear day, you may find my text just inside, or just outside—I’s e forgot which—of Longfeller’s Injun tale, and it reads ’bout so:

*“Stop not to rest where there am a sign, for there ain’t rest under its shadder. Neither eat with a land-lord, for he’s your foe. But gird up your coat-tail and marvel further, lest you lose your soul a-cussin and have your paunch eaten into a partridge net with poison. Keep the dust of the dining-room offen your foot, and the smell of the bedroom offen your clothes, that your days may be longer in the land what your Daddy’s took from the Injuns.”*

“Fellow sufferers, he and she! The shakin and jumblin of this-here war of our’n has fetched up to the top of the ground a new kind of poisonous reptile, which for dirty ways and short turns kin just beat the best cross atwixt a buzzard and a wolf you ever seed. As soon as he bores his way outen the earth

what hatched him and where he oughta be yet, he gits him a long house; prints onto the front of it some catchin name to tote in the hungry and unwary, and the damn fools generally; calls hisself the 'Perpryiter.' And you mustn't call him anything else; for *if* you does, you'd better gird up your coat-tails and marvel further, and marvel faster, for his boot has a pow'ful-strong swing, a pow'ful-long swing, and a pow'ful-quick swing.

"He is now prepared to starve, 'sult, swindle, be-dirty, bedevil, and turn inside out the purse, pocket, and stomach of every misfortunate, hungry, tired devil what am wayfarin on fun, business, or from a scare. He and she, ole and young, citizen or soldier . . . he sucks 'em all out as dry as a spider does a hoss-fly and turns 'em all out to their wayfarin agin, while he looks 'zamingly after 'em with his fist full of their shinplasters. Then he wipes his horny bill onto the door-jamb, like onto a hen after she has swallered a toad, and waits for the next hoss-fly.

"Oh! Keep the dust of his dining-room offen your foot, and the smell of his bedroom offen your clothes, that your days may be longer in the land what your Daddy's took from the Injuns!

"The Perpryiter's suction am strong: he could suck a anvil—if it were gold—down his throat from one end of Cumberland Tunnel to t'other. And there's no law of anybody's make—nor the squires' make nor the generals' make—what kin weaken that suction a morsel or make a mark onto his shell. Law just rolls offen his back like drops of water offen a duck or

mallard, and sufferin rolls offen his cast-iron conscience still a little faster.

“I seed a threadbare, faded, cryin soldier’s widder—with a skeleton daguerreotype of its graveless father in her arms, a-tuggin at a dry bladder what had once’t been a woman’s breast—a-reachin pow’ful after his conscience with a argument as long as a fishin pole and pointed with a lancet. It were in few words, but every one of ’em were red-sparklin-hot from a burnin heart: ‘For the sake of this fatherless infant, don’t turn me away! Here’s the last dollar of the last eleven my husband lived to draw . . . you are most welcome to it. Give me but a cold mouthful; *we* are starving. And, oh, look, sir! The rain has turned to sleet.’ Her blue lips quivered. And the rain-drops offen her bonnet, and the teardrops outen her modest, hopeless eyes, splashed together offen the little daguerreotype hot and cold together—and it hadn’t life enough left to cringe.

“The Perpryiter looked down at her as cold as the north side of Lookout Mountain in January and told her, without payin a full bill in advance she couldn’t stay. And he read a rule offen the wall: ‘Persons travellin without any baggage must pay their bills in advance.’ Now, my hearers, you know I ain’t got nary a soul, and damn if the Perpryiter ain’t in the same boat.

“Hint to him that your bill’s bigger nor your dinner; and he’ll smile like he loved you, and tell you that he’s just ruinatin hissself and his family clean-out as far as his wife’s cousin’s dog—and a durned

interestin family it generally is to dog in—by chargin you as low as he has. My experience among this sort of tavrins and grub factories has been awful—tremendously awful. I knows bein a plumb natural-born, durned fool makes agin me everywhere. But if there's one place worse to me for manifold tribulations than another this side the place where murderers, 'dulterers, hook-nose Jews, circuit riders, tavrinn folk, and such-like cattle go to after they's swept from the face of the earth by death's broom—to comfort theirselves drinkin boiled tar and eatin red-hot, cast-iron sausages—it is durned infernal, single-slayed, pewter spoon, fly-blown, one-hoss, half-stocked, single-trigger, smooth-bore tavrins and railroad feed-troughs. They's shortened my days; they's lengthened my nights. They's populated the whole territory of my carcass—cleared land and woodland—with all breeds of dreadful insects. They's gutted my pocket; they's disturbed my dreams; they's astonished my stomach; they's scared my appetite; they's spoiled my smelling tools; they's deafened my ears; they's 'sulted my eyes; and they's left a master stink all over onto me forever and ever more, and more so too, a-men!

“Oh, my dear hearers. Keep the dust of their dining-room offen your foot, and the smell of their bedroom offen your clothes, that your days may be longer in the land what your Daddy's took from the Injuns!

“I seed a well-appearin man once't ask one of 'em—what lived ahind a last-year's crop of red-hot,

brass-wire whiskers run to seed, and shingled with hair like onto mildewed flax wet with saffron water and laid smooth with a hot flatiron—if he could spare him a scrimption of soap? The Perpryiter answered—in sounds as soft and sweet as a poplar dulcimer tuned by a good-natured she-angel in butterfly wings and cobweb shift—that he never were just so sorry in all his borned days to say ‘No,’ but the fact were the soldiers had stole it. ‘A towel then.’—‘The soldiers had stole it.’ ‘A tumbler.’—‘The soldiers had stole it.’ ‘A pitcher of water.’—‘The soldiers had stole it.’ ‘Then please give me a cleaner room.’ Quick as light come the same damn lie: ‘The soldiers had stole it too.’

“They buys scalded butter cause it crumbles and you can’t tote much at a load on your knife. They keeps it four months so you won’t want to go after a second load. They stops up the figures and flowers in the waffle irons, for it takes butter to fill the holes in the waffles. They makes soup outen dirty towels and jimson burrs; coffee outen niggers’ ole wool socks, roasted; tea from dog fennel; and toast from ole brogan insoles. They keeps bugs in your bed to make you rise in time for them to get the sheet for a tablecloth. They gives you a inch of candle to go to bed by, and a little nigger to fetch back the stump to make gravy in the mornin for the hunk of bull-neck you will swaller for breakfast. And they puts the top sheaf onto their awful malignity when they mentions the size of your bill. And lastly, while you’re going thru your clothes with a search warrant after fodder

enough to pay it, they refreshes your memory of other places and other times by tellin you of the awful high price of turkeys, eggs, and milk.

“When the Devil takes a likin to a feller and wants to make a sure thing of gittin him, he just puts it into his head to open a catfish tavrín with a grand rat-attachment, gong ’companiment, bull’s-neck variation, cockroach chorus, and bedbug refrain . . . and damn if he don’t git him as sure as he rattles the first gong. And durn their ornery souls, they looks like they expected you to b’lieve that they am pious, decent, and fit to be associated with—by lookin down on you like you belonged to the unregenerate . . . and keepin a cussed ole spindle-shank, rattlin, crazy piano (with mud daubers’ nests under the soundin board) a-bummin out ‘Days of Absence’ or ‘The Devil’s Dream,’ bein driven thereto by their long-waisted, greasy-haired daughter and bein listened to by just such durned fools as I is.

“There am another feature in the catfish tavrín what it ain’t perfect without. It is to these sweet-scented institutions what the twist is to the pig’s tail, and am in the shape of a ole hairy-lipped woman. Sometimes she is a mother-in-law; sometimes she is a she-uncle; sometimes a ole maid-sister without the first four letters; and allers a durned nuisance generally, and a match for the Scotch itch personally. She am featured like onto a whiteface muley-cow what had been poisoned with poison oak vine. She has a pair of sandbag ankles; her body looks like it mighta been moulded in a barrel with a big bulge;

she's fond of boiled taters and bad news; she wears round shiny specks . . . a bunch of keys . . . a calico reticule and seed-bag cap—one full of quilt scraps and pipes, and t'other as full of deviltry: shortcuts to mean tricks and plans to discomfort folks.

“She watches the women customers' rooms of nights, and tells next day what she seed, or hoped to see. She knows to a crumb how much you have eaten, and begrudges it to half a crumb. She makes her garters outen the hems of ole shirt-tails and is so savin, she wears but one at a time. She b'lieves in low-quartered shoes, fallin from grace often, and in dip-pin as the cure. She couldn't live a minute anywhere but in a catfish tavin, and I'm durned glad she can't.

“Now bretheren and sistren, outen all this I has gathered the follerin awful facts what oughta be known to all parsons, priests, and persons who preach. Firstly, the perpryiters of catfish tavrins and railroad feed-troughs am hell's recruitin officers. *He* goes there hisself, of course, afore his toe-nails git cold; and most of the misfortunate devils what has stopped with him goes there, too, for cussin and vengeful thinkin fetched about by dirt, sloth, swindle, sufferin, stealin, and starvation. Secondly, it am a awful 'sponsible undertaking to keep a catfish tavin, for it has a brimstone retribution as big as a car shed a-follerin close't after it. And, finally, I'd just rather do without the institution entirely. Give me the plain, one-bottle doggerly for my drinkin; the kitchens for

my vittles ; and the barns for my bed, where the bugs cease to bite and the tired kin rest.

“Wherefore, stop not to rest where there am a sign, for there ain’t rest under its shadder. Neither sup with a landlord, for he’s your foe. But gird up your coat-tail and marvel further, lest you lose your soul a-cussin and have your paunch eaten into a partridge net with poison. Keep the dust of the dining-room offen your foot, and the smell of the bedroom offen your clothes, that your days may be longer in the land what your Daddy’s took from the Injuns.”



## TRIPETOWN: TWENTY MINUTES FOR BREAKFAST

“I were once’t a-ridin onto the cars of a railroad, and had been livin on nothin but some bites of whiskey for a whole day and nite, and felt like a congregation of rats were a-buildin their nests outen sifter wire in my stomach and a hive of bees were a-fixin to swarm in my head, when the conductor run his fore-end into the door—up to the butt of his watch-chain—and hollered:

“ ‘Tripetown. Twenty minutes for breakfast.’

“ ‘That’s me,’ says I, and I went over. I just tell you this case to show you that the sermon I have been preachin, with Catfish Tavrins for a text, were provoked outen me.

“I set down, and oh, lordy! Such a breakfast! My talk (bad as you says it were) about the Catfish people don’t begin to do justice to this mess of truck. A hungry dog wouldn’t have smelt it, nor a experienced buzzard even lit onto it, if there were a dead hoss in a hundred mile. I tried a bite, and it flew outen my mouth like there’d been a steel mattress spring coiled in my throat. So, of course, I were the first one outen there.

“There he were, the everlastin perpryiter, a-standin in the door with his paw full of notes, a-lickin the ball of his t’other thumb like he were hungry to begin, that bein the chief end of the Catfish-man.

“‘Two dollars and a half . . . *you* must make the change,’ said he all in one breath.

“I thought I’d see if *all* his feelins were seared with a red-hot iron, and so I said—lookin mighty-serious and pious-like right square into the middle of the glass of his specks, what covered a pair of as mean and money-lovin eyes as ever stared at the eagle onto a dime until that-there bird shut his own up with shame—:

“‘You keep a all-fired good house, Mister. Good biscuit, and coffee to match. It gives a man a appetite to just look at you. It gives him a appetite and a stomach to look at your wife. And it sets ’em both a-rarin and a-squealin to smell your table. This am a wholesome place. And as I has fared so well about you, I wants to tell you a valuable secret: how to make your coffee, good as it is, still better, and not cost a cent more.’

“ ‘Much obliged, indeed,’ says he, and lookin as sweet round the mouth as if he’d been a-tastin good brandy and white sugar, and were wantin of more.

“Now the travellers were comin out, nigh onto eighty of ’em, and wantin me outen the way so they could pay for what nastiness and poison they’d swaltered and git outen the smell of it as soon as possible. I just kept on talkin ’bout my improvement onto coffee till I thought most of ’em were in ear-shot, when I raised my sound and said:

“ ‘If you want to make that good coffee of your’n better, just you—instead of makin it outen ole boot-legs—put in about half of a ole wool hat chopped-fine, finer nor you chops your hash say, into pieces a inch square. It will help the taste pow’ful, and not set the smell back a bit.’

“I flung down my money and put for the train. I swear, as I went I could feel the focus of them specks a-burnin into the back of my head, and I smelt my hair swingin. I knowed that he were tryin to look thru me, and the people—men and women—were screamin a-laughin at somethin.

“To help his mad to a head, one feller had set down onto the step with a cigar clamped atween his knees, a biscuit into each hand, whettin away . . . tryin to strike fire outen them onto it. Another had fired one of the biggest and hardest biscuits at the smoke-house, and it went through the weathered boardin like a grape shot. Another polite, bowin, smilin feller come out with the drumstick end of the hind-leg of a ole gander ’twixt his finger and thumb,

and narrated that it were ole Powhatan's war club and he were goin to start hissself a museum.

"Out in the yard lay a long feller flat onto his belly, with his legs wide apart and his paws locked round a parboiled beef-rib; and he were gnawin at t'other end of it first in one side of his mouth, and then t'other . . . growlin like a dog and a-eyein sidewise the picture set in the door-frame all the while.

"A long-necked passenger topped off with a seal-skin cap come rushin out in a Shanghai trot with a strip of tough tripe as long as a surcingle. He had it by the middle in his mouth, and were a-slashin and a-slappin the end agin everybody what he passed by, vig'rously shakin his head just like a dog does when he's a-killin snakes, or a sow playin with rags afore a storm.

"All these shines didn't stop the laughin a bit, if I noticed right. Well, when I'd got off about thirty yards, I ventured to look back. There he stood, the most awful picture of unregenerated wrath mortal man ever seed. He looked like he'd weigh five hundred pounds; he were swelled all over, nigh onto bustin, and the door were chock-full of him, all in a strut. His arms stuck out like a settin hen's wings, his hat cocked before, his feet wide apart, and he *were* a-lookin at me sure enough. Them specks blazin like two red lamps . . . his lips a-flutterin as he blowed out the hot breath and foam of his unbearable pent-up wrath what my unequaled and unheard-of impudence to *him, the perpryiter*, had set a-boilin in his innards until he were nigh burnt-out, through to the hair and

waistcoat. The smoke of his torment were a-comin out in whiffs from his breeches pockets and button holes.

“My lookin back tetched the trigger. An idea, and speech, now come to him for the first time, and he exploded. He just bellered like a bull bawlin in a tunnel, a-flingin big splotches of foam and spittle way offen the step at every word: ‘Spose—you—go—to—hell—you—damn—rascal!’

“He were onto his tiptoes when he said this. And, as he ended the word ‘rascal,’ he come down onto his heels till he made the windows chatter and his big watch-seals dance agin.

“I just kept on the railroad cars and didn’t do what he told me to. After we’d run two miles, I looked back. And we were so far that the door looked like a black spot on the house, and I wish I may be totally durned—accordin to law—if I didn’t still see them hot specks right in the middle of it, blazin away like two leetle red stars. Some awful calamity took place at that railroad trough to somebody afore *he* simmered down.”

## FRUSTRATING A FUNERAL

“It must be a sorta vexin kind of thing to be buried alive, to the feller what am in the box. Don’t you think it am, George?”

“Yes, horrible, Sut. What set you thinkin about such a subject, with as much whiskey as you have access to?”

“Oh, durn it. I thinks at random, just as I talk and does. I can’t help it. I’s e got no steerin oar to my brains. ’Sides that, I thinks they’s *loose* ’bout the middle.”

“How do you mean?”

“Well, I thinks people’s brains what have souls am like onto a chain made outen gristle, forkèd at

one end—one fork goes to the eyes and t'other to the ears—and t'other end am welded to the marrow in the backbone, and it works sorta so. There stands a hoss. Well, the eyes ketches his shape—just a shape—and gives that idea to the first link of the chain. He nickers, and the ears gives that to t'other fork of the chain—a sound, nothin but a sound. Well, the two rough ideas start along the chain, and every link is smarter nor the one ahind it, and digests 'em sorta like a paunch does corn or mashed feed; and, by the time they gits to the back-bone, it am a hoss and you *knows* it. Now in my case, there's a hook in the chain and it's most of the time unhooked; and then my ideas stop there, half-made. Right there's where Dad failed in his experiment: puttin in that durned-fool hook's what made me a natural-born fool. The breed were bad, too, on Dad's side: they all run to durned fool and legs powerful strong."

"But what about buryin alive, Sut?"

"Oh, yas. I were a-thinkin of a case what happened on Hiwassee, what like to started a new breed of durned fools and did scare plumb away a whole neighborhood of ole breed.

"Ole Hunicutt had a nigger name Caesar—they called him Ceaze for short—and he got a sockful of Wright's kill-devil whiskey and took a notion he'd spite ole Hunicutt by dyin, and durned if he didn't do it! His master got a coffin with a hinge in the lid acrosst the breast, for t'other niggers to take farewell of Ceaze thru and see the awful consequences of drinkin kill-devil by the gallon at the same time. He

meant to give 'em a temp'rance lecture when they went to start to the bone yard; but durn me if he stayed there hissself till funeral time.

“The niggers got Ceaze set in the box mighty nice, and the lid on. He were in a empty room—exceptin a bed in one end—of a double-log nigger cabin; and the niggers what set up with the corpse did it in the t'other room. There were lots of 'em, and singin and groanin were plenty. Way in the night, a nigger name 'Major' come to help do the sittin up, and he were drunk plumb thru and thru; so they fetched him into where Ceaze were and laid him in the bed, where he soon fell to snorin and dreamin of snakes, sky-blue lizards, and red-hot reptiles.

“Now a young doctor what had helped Ceaze over the fence twixt this and kingdom come wanted his carcass to chop up and boil, so he gits me to find it for him after it were under the ground. And I, findin out how the land lay by slungin round, fixed up a short cut to git it without diggin. I slipped into the room twixt midnite and day and found Major sorta grumblin in his sleep. So I shook him awake enough to *smell whiskey* and held a tin cupful of heartburn till the last durned drop run down his throat, and he set into sleepin agin . . . and then I *swapped niggers*.

“After I got Maje into the coffin and had cut some air-holes, I set in and painted red and white stripes, time about, runnin out from under his eyes like onto the spokes of a wheel . . . and cross-barred his upper lip with white, until it looked like boars' tushes; and I fastened a couple of yearling's horns onto his head,



and plaited a dead blacksnake round the roots of 'em. And durn my legs if I didn't come nigh onto takin a runnin scare myself, for he were a perfect daguerreotype of the Devil, took while he were smokin mad 'bout some rascal what had been sellin shanghai and a-peddlin matchless sanative all his life, then joinin meetin on his death bed and escapin.

"I now turn my 'tention to Mister Ceaze. I'd got 'bout a tin cupful of lightnin bugs and cut off the lantern of the last durned one. I smeared 'em all over his face, hair, and ears, and onto the prongs of a pitchfork. I set him up in the corner on end and give him the fork, prong-end up, in his crossed arms. I then pried open his mouth and let his teeth shut onto the back of a live bullfrog; and I smeared its paws and belly with some of my bug-mixture; and pinned a little, live garter-snake by its middle crosswise in Ceaze's mouth, smeared like the frog plumb to the point of his tail. The pin kept the snake pow'ful busy makin circles and other crooked shapes in the air. Now right there, boys, in that corner, stood the dolefullest scare-makin machine mortal man ever seed outen a ghost camp. I tell you now, I b'lieves strong in ghosts, and in forewarnins too.

"I heerd someone a-comin, and I backed away on my all-fours under the bed. It were Simon, the ole preachin and exhortin nigger of the neighborhood. He held a light—made outen a rag and some fat—in a ole saucer, and he come—sighin and groanin with his mouth pouched out—up to the coffin without seein Ceaze in the corner at all, and histed the lid . . .

dropped the saucer and lost the light, and said: 'Oh! Goramighty! Massy on dis soul! De debil hesef on top ob brudder Ceaze!'

"As he straightened to run, he seed Ceaze in the corner. Just then I moaned out in a awful doleful voice: 'Hypocrite, come to hell. I has a claim onto you for holdin the bag while Ceaze stole corn.' I seed 'em a-doin that job not long afore. He just reared backwards and fell outen the door with his hands locked, and said he in a weak, fever-ague sort of voice, 'Please, marster,' and just fainted. He soon come to a-runnin, for I heerd the corn crashin thru the big field like a engine were runnin express through it. I ain't seed Simon to this day.

"Now ole Hunicutt had been pow'fully aggravated 'bout the corn-stealin business goin on. In fact, he fell from grace about it bad. So, whenever he heerd any sound outen doors of a 'spicious kind, up he'd jump with a shotgun and take a scout round the barn and cornerib.

"Well, as soon as Simon commenced runnin with the feeble hope of beatin the Devil, I shouldered Ceaze and toted him out to the crib and set him up agin the door, as it were there the doctor were to find him 'cordin to 'greement. You see, I wanted to break him from suckin eggs. I thought when he took a good 'zamine of Ceaze and his pitchfork and bullfrog and fire-bugs' tails, it would take away his appetite for graveyards and boiled bones till he got ole enough to practice without such dirty doins, and might even

make him join meetins. I couldn't tell how much good it might do the unb'liever.

"I'd scarcely got Ceaze balanced so he'd stand good when I heerd ole Hunicutt comin. I heerd his gun cock, so I just betook myself under the cornerrib with my head close't to Ceaze's legs and hid ahind his wind-in-sheet, unbeknownst to him and his durned ole shotgun too. The ole thief-hunter sneaked monstrous careful round the corner in his shirt-tail—come within three feet of the dead nigger, and then seed him!

"In the same doleful sounds I used onto Simon I said: 'Hunicutt, you'se fell from grace. I'll take you down home *now*, lest you might git good *and die afore you fell agin.*'

"Durn my picture if I didn't come monstrous nigh helpin the Devil to one awful sinner, unexpected, right there in earnest. He dropped in a pile like onto a wet bed quilt. As he struck, he said: 'I haint fell from gr—'

"Right then and there, I reached out and grabbed his shirt—a saving hold with both hands—set my cold, sandy foot agin his bare back and leaned into pullin pow'ful strong. Says I: '*Yes you am* fell from grace. Don't you lie to *me*; do you know Missis Loftin? *Come with me.*'

"When I mentioned Missis Loftin, he fetched a master lunge. I heerd his collar buttons snap, and he went outen that shirt like a dog outen a badger-barrel, and he run—yas, by the great golly!—he flew. I trumpeted after him: 'Stop, I means to take Missis Loftin *with you.*' He were a-runnin square

and low till he heerd that and, durn Dad, if he didn't rise now six foot in the air every lunge, and he'd make two or three runnin motions afore he'd light. I sent what were in both barrels of his shotgun after him, but the shot never ketched up. I got a shotgun and a shirt for myself.

"I knowed the pill-roller wouldn't venture close't now after all the fuss and shootin; he'd lose his mess of boiled bones first. So I shouldered Ceaze and put over the hills to his shop, takin a circumbendibus round so as not to come up with him on the path. He weren't in—he sure enough had started—but the shotgun had made him hide hissself first, and afterwards go home.

"I ended Ceaze up in his bed, back again the wall and facin the door. Directly I heerd his tin pill-boxes, his squirt, and his pullicans rattlin in his pockets . . . he were a-comin. I just slid under the bed and stuck my head up atween it and the wall, and ahind Ceaze.

"He stepped into the dark room and, by the help of the fire-bug plaster, he seed a heap. In fact, more nor were comfortable by about sixty-two and a half cents. There were a 'luminated snake a-wavin round; there were the shiny frog movin his legs and paws like he were a-swimmin, then he'd gesture with his arms like he were makin a stump-speech; there were the pitchfork with its hot prongs—the doctor heerd them sizz; and more nor all, there were the awful corpse with its face and hair all afire. Too much hell on that bed even for a bone-boiler's nerves. He just

stopped short, froze to the heart. I felt his shiverin come to me in the floor planks.

“I took the same ole device what had such a movin effect onto Simon and Hunicutt, and said: ‘You wants some bones to boil, does you? Didn’t raise any tonight, did you? I’s in that business myself—follered it nigh onto thirty thousand years. I’s a-boilin Ike Green’s and Polly Weaver’s and ole Ceaze’s, what you poisoned for me, *and they sent me after you*. Let’s go. My boilin house is warm . . . you’s cold . . . come, sonny.’

“When I spoke of ole Ceaze, he knowed I were that awful king of sorrow, and that he were goin to ride onto the prongs of that-there pitchfork—drippin now with the burnin tallow offen Ceaze’s ribs—straight to where all quacks go. Says he: ‘W-w-ait, sir, till I gits my physic box. I’s onwell, please.’ And outen the door he bulged.

“I hollered after him: ‘Bring your diploma; I wants to ’zamine *it*.’

“‘Oh, yes sir.’ I heerd this away back of the field. In thirty-one days from that date, he were tendin a grist-mill in California. If he tends it on the plan he tended folks here, he’s got *its* bones a-boilin afore now.

“I wish, George, some smart man-body would boil the bones of a grist-mill and find the cause, and p’raps the cure, for ‘mill-sick.’ ”

“What in the name of the Prophet is ‘mill-sick,’ Sut?”

“Why, it’s a ailin what mills generally has. It’s

mighty hurtin, too, for the people in the whole neighborhood kin *feel* the sufferin of the misfortunate mill."

"How does it affect the mills?"

"Why, awfully. They don't pass all they chaws. You sometimes sees signs of it on the miller and his hogs; they looks like they has the dropsy.

"Now durn just such luck. Here I were with Ceaze's corpse on hand and it nigh onto daylight: no box; no spade; no hole; and, worse nor all, no whiskey. Durn fools don't allers have such luck as this were; if they did, how would people ever git rich or to Congress? I made the best I could outen a bad fix. I just toted the ole scare out into the woods and hid him under a log, and went over to Hunicutt's agin. I were bound to go, for my whiskey were hid there.

"The niggers were all in a huddle in the kitchen, and the white folks all a-cryin and a-snufflin. Missis Hunicutt were out a-top the fence bars, a-callin of him—'Oh, Hunicuttee,' like callin cows—and he weren't answerin. In fact, everybody were scared durn nigh outen their wits.

"I told 'em the best thing they could do were to git the dirt a-top of that nigger Ceaze as quick as spades and hoes could do it; that I knowed somethin were wrong with Ceaze—must have been a awful hypocrite afore he died; Parson Simon must have been spirited off with a burnin saucer of fat in his hand; Maje weren't in the bed and were too drunk to git away hissself; and as I come here just

afore day, I met Mister Hunicutt way up in the air, ridin a-straddle of a burnin ladder with Missis Loftin ahind him, her petticoat-tail a-blazin and she a-singin: 'Farewell, vain worl'; I'se gwine home.'

"Hunicutt's ole cook rolled up her eyes and said, smackin her hands: 'Dar, dat's hit. I'se know dis tree munf Missis Loftin fotch de debil heah afore she done. Goramighty bress de worl, she done do hit now!'

"Missis Hunicutt looked at me keenly and asked me if I were sure it were Missis Loftin I seed on the ladder. I told her: 'Yas. I'd swear it. I knowed her calico.'

"Says she: 'Now I kin bear my b'reavement.' And she set into combin her hair.

"Well, the niggers geared a pair of hosses to a wagon and put the coffin in, without scarcely sayin a word or even venturin to take a farewell look of the corpse; they wanted it away from there, sure as you are born. Just s'pose they had opened that lid and seed Maje dressed up as he were. Oh, lordy!

"Suckey—that's Ceaze's wife—set on the head of the coffin, and the balance of it were soon covered with she-niggers; they just swarmed onto the wagon and all round it, and started. When they got into the edge of town, nigh onto Wright's doggery, Maje begun to wake from the joltin and set into buttin the lid with his head, his horns a-rattlin agin it. Suckey felt somethin under her she didn't like. *Butt-rattle* come up Maje's head and horns harder nor before. Her eyes swelled to the size and looks of

hard-boiled eggs, and she riz herself offen the coffin a little with her hands. 'Butt, whoosh!' said Maje, and the coffin lid come up to Suckey's stern like it had been a lodestone spat.

"'Pete, you Pete. Jis' whoa dem hosses right heah an' leff me off ob dis wagon.'

"Maje give another savagerous butt and said, a-chokin like: 'Dis am de debil!' Suckey lit in the road.

"'I'se gwine to my missus, I is,' said Suckey, and back she put, shakin her petticoats and pullin 'em round so she could see the hind-parts where the lid had acted lodestone. 'De debil hesef in dat box with Ceaze, sure, fur he say so. *I* tole you dis, Ceaze; I hes more time nor I hes har. Now you's gone an' done hit, you hes.' And she struck a cow gallop for home.

"*Butt* come Maje's head again; and, there bein no Suckey with her hundred and fifty pounds of soap grease to hold it down, over come the lid *slap*. Maje reared up on end. 'Whoosh! Dis am de debil,' he said. Thirty screams mixed in one; clatterin of shoes; and scratchin of toenails; and there weren't a nigger left in sight afore a stutterin man could whistle.

"Now Maje knowed nothin 'bout how he looked, but he seed the coffin and the wagon. Says he: 'Well, by golly! Dis am a go. Gwine to burry dis chile, an' neber ax 'im. Whar de mourners? Whar de passun? An' whar de corpsis? Dat's what I wants to know. Sumfin wrong heah!' And he bit his arm savage as



a dog. 'Ouch! I isn't dead, and I'se a-comin outen heah. Dus you hear my horn? I is dat. Dat durn 'ceitful, preachin, Simon done dis; he want Sally. I kill 'em bof; de coffin am ready. Mus' want to bury somebody pow'ful bad. Whar were de white folks?' Here he commenced a monstrous scuffin to git out.

"The hosses looked round and seed him. Of course, they instantly set in to run away strong: hit a post and pitched the black box up in the air where it looked like a big grasshopper a-jumpin. It lit on end and busted the lid off. Out bounced Maje and, shakin hissself, he took a drunk, staggerin look at it and says he, a-motionin the coffin away from him with both hands: 'See heah. You jis go long to de boneyard, you black debil, whar you b'longs; I'se not gwine wid you; I sends Simon to you dis arternoon.' And he started for the doggerly.

"Wright had come to the door and were a-lookin and a-wonderin at the upraised coffin, when Maje faced him and started at him in a trot; he wanted a horn bad. His head, horns, and snake penetrated Wright's mind with the idea that it were the Devil and, knowin that the ole soot-maker held several notes of hand agin him 'bout due, he fixed it up that the Devil were goin to levy onto him and had fetched a coffin to tote him home in. So he just tried to dodge the law. He jumped the counter, was out the back door, and commenced a lightnin line for the mountain.

"I were ahind the doggerly in the thicket, and I bellered out: 'Stop, Wright. I owes you for a heap

of sinners—you sent me Ceaze yesterday—and I'se come to settle for 'em.'

"He were the first man I ever seed run from a feller when he wanted to pay a debt. Durn ole Hark, if he weren't just openin a wagon road thru the pine thicket thirty-mile to the hour. You could see the limbs and little rocks a-flyin above the trees as he went, and he sounded like a hurricane and were a-movin as fast.

"When I spoke them words, the limbs and little rocks fairly darkened the air, and the sound got louder even if it *were* a heap further off. He were as earnest a man as ever run. I think he did the most unresistable runnin I ever seed. Nothin were in his way; he just mowed it all down as he fled from as just a retribution as ever follered any durned rascal since ole Shockly chased Parson Bumpas with a shotgun retribution for unsanctifyin his wife."

"Did Shockly catch Bumpas, Sut?"

"I dunno. He musta run him pow'ful close't; for he fetched back his hoss, hat, and hymn book . . . and both caps on his gun were busted . . . and nobody name Bumpas has been seed 'bout there since, exceptin some little, flax-headed fellers scattered through the circuit with no daddies, and not much mammies, to speak of. If I'd a-seed the Devil as plain as Wright did the day they tried to bury Ceaze and didn't, I'd a-asked him; *he* knows whether Shockly catched Bumpas or not.

"Well, Maje come blowin mad into the doggerly

and, seein nobody, he just grabbed a bottle and took hisself a buckload of popskull, and slipped the bottle into his pocket. As he raised his awful head from doin this, he seed hisself for the first time in a big lookin-glass. He took it to be a window, and thought what he seed were in t'other room, a-watchin him.

“‘You—you jis lef me lone; I’s e not yourn; *I b’longs to meetin,*’ said Maje, as he backed hisself to’ards the door.

“As he backed, so did the terrifyin picture. Maje seed that. ‘Gwine to take a runnin butt, is you,’ said Maje, as he fell a back-somersault into the street.

“As he lit, I groaned out at him: ‘Major, my son. I’s e come for the toll outen ole Hunicutt’s corn.’

“‘Simon done got dat toll,’ said Maje, sorta shamed-like. He riz, showin a fair sample of scared nigger runnin. ‘Ho’ns and buttin go together, an’ dat an de debil in dar,’ said Maje to hisself.

“I hollered: ‘Leave Wright’s bottle; you don’t want it. *I’ll give you hotter truck nor it is;* I’s e fairly after you now.’ I seed the bottle fly over Maje’s shoulder and light in the sand. I got it, I did.

“He made down street for the river and cleared the road of every livin thing. Women went head-first in the houses; doors slammed; sash fell; cats’ tails swelled as they treed under stables—Maje just a-tearin along, his horny head throwed back and his elbows a-workin like a pair of scared sawmills runnin empty. I seed him fling somethin over his head. I

thought it were another bottle and went for it, but it were nothin but a greasy Testament.

“Ole Dozier, the Sheriff, what had hung a nigger name Pomp ’bout ten days afore, come outen a cross street just ahead of Maje, a-totin his big belly, a handful of papers, and a quill in his mouth—in a deep study. He heard the sound of Maje’s hoofs and looked round. As he did, I shouted:

“ ‘Run, Sheriff. That’s Pomp, and here’s his coffin,’ a-pointin to it.

“George, my experience is that sheriffs, and law officers generally, understands the business of runnin better nor most folks anyhow; and durn my shirt, if ole Dozier didn’t just then sustain the character of the tribe monstrous well.

“He had pow’ful presence of mind, too, for I’d scarcely said ‘coffin’ afore he were at the top of his speed to’ards the river. Now Maje, like most durned white fools, b’lieved the Sheriff to be greater nor anybody and had the power to do anything. So a idea got under his horns and ahind his eyes that Dozier could help him somehow to get rid of that chasin devil, and he hollered ‘Marster Dozier!’ Dozier dropped his quill. ‘Marster Sheriff.’ Sheriff let loose a cloud of flyin papers in the wind. ‘Stop dar, I hes a word wid you.’ Dozier run outen his hat and specks with a jerk, and I seed his dinner tub a-swinging out each side of him—like a bag with a scared dog into it—every lope he made.

“I galloped catty-cornered across lots, and got in a paw-paw thicket on the bank of the river afore

they got round there. As Dozier whizzed by, the sweat flyin offen his head in all directions like water offen a runnin grindstone, I spoke to him in a mournful way: 'Sheriff, your time am come; *he's got a rope.*'

"Durn if he didn't sheer outen the road like a scared hoss and went offen the bluff—frog fashion—into the river—and dove. The waves washed up on t'other bank three foot high; a steamboat couldn't have done it better; and as good a growin rain fell for five minutes as were ever prayed for, and not a cloud to be seed that day.

"Here come Maje, his eyes and their stripes like buggy wheels with red lamps in the hubs. Says I: 'Here I is, close't to your stern. I *must* have my toll corn.' Durn ole Paddleford, if Maje didn't play scared hoss better nor Dozier did, for he lit further in the river and we had another refreshin shower; but I swear, I thought it smelt of whiskey.

"Both on 'em were swimmin for t'other bank like otters. The Sheriff's hot head were smokin like a tub of boiled shirts, and Maje's looked like a black bull yearling's just a-boilin thru the water. As ole Dozier trotted drippin up the bank, I yelled: 'Rise, Sheriff. He's a-reachin for you with his rope, *and it's got a running noose.*' He looked over his shoulder and seed the bull yearling's head close't in shore, and a-comin. He just rained sand and gravel into the river from his heels and went outen sight in the tall weeds.

"As Maje went up the bank, I called to him:

‘Major, my son. *Where’s Wright’s bottle?*’ I seed him feel on his coat-tail; the durned nigger had forgot flingin it over his head, and he took the Sheriff’s trail like onto a hound. I took a good, wholesome pull outen that bottle, and thought what a durned, discomfortin thing a big scare is.

“Plenty people am ready to swear they seed the Devil chasing Dozier plumb to the mountain. And one ole woman, a-givin in her experience at meetin, said she seed him ketch him and eat him plumb up. She told a durned lie, I expect.

“I performed two Christian duties that night. I stole the coffin and buried Ceaze out in the woods where I’d hid him; and his real grave stands open yet, the best frog-trap you ever seed. See the awful consequences of bein scary when a nigger dies: *Hunicutt* gone; Ceaze’s corpse lost; *doctor* gone; *parson* gone; *sheriff* gone; and, to cap the stack of vexatious things, the *doggery keeper* gone. Why, the county’s ruinated, and it’s haunted yet with all sorts of awful haunts; you kin buy land there for a dime a acre, on tick at that.”

“What became of Mrs. Hunicutt and Mrs. Loftin, Sut?”

“Oh, as to ’em: Missis Hunicutt is playin widder in red ribbons, and Missis Loftin joined meetin.

“I’se forgot somethin; what am it? Oh! I minds now; ’t were that t’other Christian duty I performed. I ministered onto Wright’s doggery and run it till the grass burnt up, when it went dry. I wish it might have a calf soon.”

PART SEVEN

**SUT**  
**ON THE**  
**NATIONAL SCENE**





SUT LOVINGOOD TRAVELS  
WITH OLD ABE AS  
HIS CONFIDENTIAL FRIEND  
AND ADVISER

“When I told you, George, that I were a-goin to travel with ole Abe Linkhorn, you thought I were a-lyin; but now you see I’m here, ain’t I? I just struck across country and ketched up with him at Harrisburg—durn such a place, I say—and I have stuck close’t to the ole Windin Blades till I got him safe into this here tavrinn—they calls it ‘Willard’s’—and I’m durn if the ole hoss of the house ain’t a jedge of liquor. I’ve tasted it, I has. And I’ll tell you another thing: ole Windin Blades am sleeping in the same room what I dreamed of in one thousand eight hundred and fifty-six . . . where Ole Buchanan played that awful game of cards with

Fillmore and Frémont for the President's chair and won it too; and he prides hisself in sitting in it more by a durned sight nor them does what set him there.

"But as I were a-goin to tell you; as I were a-gittin thru Bald-timore, I seed a feller a-sittin onto a barrel, a-filin at the lock of a durned ole revoltin pistol. Says I: 'Mister, are you goin to war?'"

"'Yes,' says he. 'I'm goin to bore ole Abe's ears for him as he comes along.'

'I went a piece further and seed another fat ole tub a-cuttin a cheese with a knife a foot long. 'That's a monstrous knife, Mister,' says I.

"'Y-a-w,' says he. 'I means to feel ole Abe's haslet with it,' says he.

"I rocked along and seed another feller a-rubbin bright a awful cannon; it were as big as a pump log. Goin to shoot?" says I.

"'Not jist yet,' says he, measurin my height and heft with his eye.

"'When are you goin to shoot, if I might be so bold?'"

"'Day after tomorrow,' says he. 'I'm jist goin to take Ole Abe in the place what first tetches a hoss; and damn, if he don't light beyond Washin'ton, it'll be that this-here powder ain't good.' And he dipped up a tin cupful outen a barrel and poured it back like it were whiskey.

"Just about this time the idea got under my hair that Bald-timore weren't much to speak of for ole Windin Blades, and that they meant to have a funeral outen him when he got there. So I put out to

meet him and tell of the immediate wrath to come, and the awful tribulation barrelled up for his widder and that promisin son—Bob—of his'n.

“Now, George, Bob may make a monstrous fine man; I don't say he won't. But as a boy—mind, I say as a boy—I'm damned if I fancy him a bit. Some feller will turn him inside out some of these days, see if he don't; and who knows, but it would improve the little critter. He can't live as he is, that's certain.

“Well, when I told ole Windin Blades what I had seed and heerd, his eyes sorta bulged and sorta spread, and his mouth swelled out, and says he: ‘I ain't prepared to die, Suttty, my Son’—he calls me ‘Suttty’ when he wants help, and ‘Mister Lovingood’ when he's got his dignity on and a parcel of flat backs round him and he feels good and safe—‘I has done the things I hadn't oughta, and left undone the things I had oughta.’ And here he hung down his head and studied a long time, while I set still and took a general observation of a President, and if he ain't a long one and a narrow one, I'm durned.

“His mouth, his paw, and his footses am the principal features, and his strikin point is the way them-there legs of his'n gets into his body. They goes in at each edge sorta like the prongs goes into a pitch fork. Of all the durned, scary-lookin, ole cusses for a President ever I seed, he am decidedly the durndest. He looks like a yaller ladder with half the rungs knocked out.

“I ketched a ole bullfrog once and drove a nail through his lips into a post, tied two rocks to his

hind toes and stuck a darnin needle into his tail to let out the moisture, and left him there to dry. I seed him two weeks after'ards; and, when I seed ole Abe, I thought it were an awful retribution come onto me, and that it were the same frog—only stretched a little longer, and had took to wearin of clothes to keep me from knowin him and ketchin him and nailin him up agin—and, natural-born durned fool as I is, I swear I seed the same watery, scary look in the eyes, and the same sorta knots on the 'back-bone.' I'm feared, George, something's to come of my nailin up that-there frog. I swear I am, ever since I seed ole Abe—same shape same color same feel (cold as ice), and I'm damned if it ain't the same smell. Somethin awful is to happen to me in spite of these-here legs, much as I 'pends on 'em; see if it don't.

“Well, after he had studied and sighed, and sorta groaned a long time, he riz his head up and says he: ‘Sutty, what had I best do in this awful emergency? The party can't spare me now. Besides, I ain't fit to die, and my whiskers have jist begun to grow, and I want to try the vittles in Washin'ton City. It won't do to let me be made a sifter by these Secession bullets jist at this time. Will it, Sutty, my Son?’

“Says I: ‘Mister Linkhorn, I'se called a natural-born, durned fool in Tennessee, but I think I kin average in these parts pretty well. And if you will just put yourself in under my care—and if ole Scott comes a-cluckin about with his wings a-trailin

or ole Seward comes a-whinin and a-smellin and a-scratching at the door, just give the tavrin keeper the hint to hist their coat-tails with his boot and that you'll pay for toe-ing one of 'em if he busts 'em . . . I'll be constitutionally, circumstantially, and indiscriminately durned if I don't put you safe to bed with Missis Linkhorn at Willard's Tavrin. I'll do it; d'you see these-here legs?' And I held one straight out above the lamp what set onto the table.

"He looked at me mournfully for a minute, and his eyes run over, and says he: 'Sutty, my Son, I'll do it, and ole Abe won't lie, so give your orders and fix things. Now, feel like I will be President yet.' And he pulled out a pint bottle from under the pillow of his bed and he measured it—with his thumbs one over the other from the bottom to the top of the whiskey—and there were just seven thumbs. He then measured back four and held the last thumb fast, and run the neck of the bottle in under his nose about four inches. When he turned it up agin, there were a half-inch clear daylight under the thumb, and he set it onto the table. When he ketched his breath, says he: 'I never encourages anyone to drink, but there's the bottle and it has your whiskey in it.' I took aboard the balance, I did, and we went to bed.

"Now how I got him to Washin'ton, I'll tell you next time we meet. Goodbye. Say, George, you never seed ole Abe, did you? Well, you've missed a sight. Nor seed Bob? No, nor the ole woman? No. Well, I'se sorry, for you ain't yet ready to die."

## SUT LOVINGOOD WITH OLD ABE ON HIS JOURNEY

“Well, as I told you, we went to bed after that unequally-divided horn, and I set in to sleepin in earnest; when I heerd ‘Kerdiff, Kerdiff’—and there stood the ole pair of Windin Blades just as he come into the world, his shirt hung on top of the bed posts, and he had his red flannel drawers in his hand by the legs, a-thrashin of ’em agin the wash-stand. Then he peeped down one leg and then down t’other. Then he turned ’em inside out and zamined under the seams from end to end.

“Says I: ‘What’s wrong? Are you huntin for a Secessionist in as narrow a place as them-there drawer legs?’

“He shook his head and still zaminid the seams. At last says he: ‘Sutty, my Son, are you troubled much with fleas down South?’

“‘Not as I knows of. Our dogs are sometimes,’ says I, ‘and we allers kicks ’em out when they scratches.’

“‘Well,’ says he. ‘I’ve allers had more or less vexation of spirit with ’em, and the nigher I gets to Washin’ton City, the worse they are. If their number and enterprise increases as they have done, afore I am there a week I’ll be a dead man.’ And then he reached down both hands and scratched both legs from his ankles up to his short ribs, and it sounded like rakin of a dry hide with a curry comb, and then he come to bed agin, but kep on a-rakin of hisself and sorta a-cussin under his breath.

“Says I: ‘Holler up a nigger and git some more tangle-leg.’

“‘What’s tangle-leg, Sutty?’

“‘Some truck like what you had in that-there lonesome-lookin feller a-standin on the table by hisself.’

“‘Do you want some more?’ says he.

“‘I does that, unless you’ll go to sleep.’

“He got up and drug a ole hair trunk from under the bed. When he turned back the lid, there the bottles stood, just like soldiers of a muster day or in a doctor’s medicine chest. We divided one tolerable fair atwixt us and were a-fixin for a sleep and a-talkin of fleas and how I would git him safe to Washin’ton, when a thunderin knockin come onto the door.

“Ole Windin Blades jumped outen bed and agin the lock at one pop, and carefully opened the door, a-holdin to the handle with both hands. After he seed and knowed ’em, he opened, when in popped two fellers in store clothes and a sorrel Irishman with flax mane and tail; and he had a letter. Ole Abe set up cross-legged in a chair in his shirt-tail and read it a long time, first one side up and then t’other; and, after talkin and whisperin a spell, the visitors left.

“Says he: ‘Sutty, my Son, this are a dispatch from General Scott, and it proves what you said about Bald-timore to be true, and a tarnal sight worse. He says that Alec Stephens am there with a twelve-pounder strapped onto his back and a lit, rich pine-torch in his hand, a-waitin for me; and that it is loaded with a quart of escopet—old Scott calls everything “escopet” that’s round—balls, three smoothin irons, four pair of butt hinges, and a gross of shoe tacks; and the ole General thinks from his knowledge of projectiles that, if it were turned loose onto me, that my hide would be as well-opened out as fish net, and my clothes made ready to stop cracks in a rain-barrel.’

“I jumped plumb outen bed and lit afore him, and looked him steady in the eye for a minute. And I felt that I were a-standin for the first time afore a man I weren’t feared of; and, too, I knowed were scarcer of sense than I were; and I were glad I had found him. For you know, George, that I thought I were the king fool of the world, and allers felt shamed and under cow about it. *Alec Stephens totin*



*a twelve-pounder!* I stood 'stonished, first at him and then at ole Scott—two bigger fools in the world than me—and both on 'em able to read and write and a-holdin high places in the nation. 'Sut's got a chance yet,' thinks I.

"Says I: 'Mister Linkhorn'—and I were scared at the boldness of my own voice—'do you understand Southern law?'

"'No,' says he. 'Only as it tetches niggers.'

"'Well,' says I. 'I'll tell you some knowledge of it has saved my life for the last twenty years, twice't a year, and it may save your'n once a month if ever you come out there, not to speak of its immediate use in this emergency. When we elects our Governors, we elects a fool-killer for every county and furnishes him with a gun, some arsenic, strychnine, and a big steel trap; and it is his duty to travel, say about one day, ahind the circuit rider. You see, the circuit rider gathers the people together, and it makes it more convenient, and the fool-killer kills off the stock of fools to a considerable extent every round he takes. Our fool-killers have done their duty, and consequently the South have seceded. I'se been a-dodgin 'em since I were able to run, and now I tell you, Mister Linkhorn—'

"'Stop, stop, *Sutty, my Son,*' says he. 'I wants to ask you a question. Why don't you stop the breed in a more humane way by emaxulation and still let 'em live? The Declaration of Independence, you know, says—'

"'Stop,' says I, for I found I were on risin ground,

‘and I’ll tell you why emaxulation won’t cover the case, no more nor freein or stealin a nigger’ll make him a white man. Fools break out like measles. They comes from the best families. And agin, a neighborhood of fools will sometime breed a smart feller. Just look at Seward as sample, or yourself. You come from Kaintuck. And it produced Hart, a feller who makes people outen stone till they kin do everything but drink, talk, and propagate their speeches; and cause they can’t do that, he’s an unmitigated, durned fool for makin ’em stead of real, livin folks. ’Spose the fool-killer were to kill—as in duty-bound he oughta—every ’bolitionist now livin! Wouldn’t the same soil and climate and feedin what produced the damned ole cusses what burnt ole palsied women as witches, and produced Joe Smith, and ole Miller, and Miss Fox, and Wendell Phillips, and Missis Bloomer with her breeches and shirt—produce just such another crop, say? Of course, it would, and yet the rich strikes in that-there country produced a Hancock and the Day Book, so emaxulation won’t do. You must kill ’em just as you catch ’em, as you does your fleas, and rely—as I does on my legs—on hard work in fol-lerin after ’em from generation to generation. They understand this here thing in Texas exactly: give ’em a blackjack and a piece of bed cord, and that are all they ask.’

“He studied a long time, and scratched, and says he: ‘Sutty, atween the fleas and your talkin, I’s sorta got to wool-gatherin. I swear I has. When I stopped you to ask that-there question, what were

you goin to say about the fool-killer in connection with my case?’

“ ‘Oh, nothin,’ says I. ‘Do you ever expect to come down South, Mister Linkhorn?’”

“ ‘No, sir,’ says he.

“ ‘Well, then, it don’t signify,’ says I. And we set into plannin how to git thru Bald-timore and save his hide whole; and it were done, and done well, too, if not too wisely. Me and Ethredge and ole John am the only fellers from the South what am in the raffle at all. Next time I see you, George, I’ll tell you how we euchred all Bald-timore.”

## SUT LOVINGOOD LANDS OLD ABE SAFE AT LAST

“After the fleas and the tangle-leg and my talk about the duty of the fool-killer and its effects, we couldn’t sleep any more, so we concluded to start on the first train.

“I had told a tailor-man—with a white face, a big foot turned out a long, measurin string, and a piece of chalk—early in the night to measure a terbacker hogshead for the body and a pair of telegraph poles for the legs, and to make a jacket and a pair of britches outen cross-barred truck, and to let them bars run catty-cornered—that is, one what started on the shoulder should end among the ribs on t’other side—and bring along a pot of red paint and a small bale of hay.

“Well, he did it. And I run the ole Windin Blades into the breeches and tied a string round the ankles, then stuffed in a mixture of hay and the contents of the hair trunk. I did likewise with the jacket and produced the biggest cross-barred man you ever seed. To judge by sight, he weighed seven hundred pounds, yet his head didn’t look bigger nor a apple. I painted the yaller off his face with the red truck, and it took three coats to cover it. And I swear, when I were done with him, he looked like he’d been on a big drunk for three weeks.

“When we got out for the train, the tavriner keeper didn’t know ole Abe, and he got off without payin of his bill. He winked at me as the cars started, and says he: ‘There am two dollars saved, certain.’ He has money sense, if he ain’t any other kind.

“We hadn’t gone far when a little, mild, husband-lookin feller in gold specks and a pencil come up to me, and says he: ‘Where’s your agent?’

“Says I: ‘What agent?’

“‘The agent for your show.’”

“I took the hint, and says I: ‘I’se the agent.’

“‘Ah,’ says he. ‘I thought you were the long half of the show.’

“‘So I is; and I’se the smart half, too, and am celebrated for the use of these-here legs.’ And I unfolded one and reached it thru the window on t’other side of the car. Says I: ‘Ain’t that some leg for reachin?’

“He run his eye twice’t along it from end to end, and says he: ‘Mister, you has run powerfully to legs.

Didn't a telegraph pole fall across your Mom afore you was borned?

"'No,' says I. 'But we kep a sand-hill crane, and Mom and him had a difficulty, and he chased her under the bed.'

"He set that down with his pencil, and then he took a measurin-sorta look at ole Abe, who pretended to be asleep. Says he, shakin his head: 'That am a monstrous man; I might say an awful man. What does he weigh?'

"'Seven hundred and ninety even.'

"He set that down. 'Has he a family?'

"'Yes, he had thirty-four children, but a sorta disease has took off seven of 'em, and he's expectin more to die every day.'

"'The ole man must be in pow'ful trouble?' says he.

"'Not much,' says I. 'He don't understand his loss.'

"'Is he smart to speak of?'

"'None to hurt,' says I.

"He set that down and started.

"Ole Abe opened his eyes and reached over and whispered in my ear atwixt his set teeth: 'That-there last observation of your'n, Mr. Lovingood, am a durn lie.' And he straightened up and hunted among the straw under his clothes till he found one of the bottles, and he give hisself some comfort and never offered me a durn morsel, but held the bottle right up to the light, and says he: 'On thinkin over it, you were right to tell him that I weren't smart, or I wouldn't be here in such immediate danger, jist for

my party and a pack of durned niggers.' And he set in to thinkin and I went to sleep, and when I waked he were a-kickin my shins.

"Says he: 'Sutty, my Son, we am in Bald-timore.' And, sure enough, there were lights along both sides of the road as far as you could see, just like a string of lightnin bugs; and fellers a-standin about with clubs under their arms and a revoltin pistol for a breastpin.

"I seed ole Abe had observed it; and he were scared, for the ash color showed thru the three coats of red lead onto his face, and he scratched his head and tried to scratch his stern thru about a foot and a half of straw and bottles. Then he looked out the window a minute and fetched in his head with a jerk, a-ketchin me by both hands, and says he: 'Great heavens, Sutty, as there am an awful hell, there am Alec Stephens now with his dreadful cannon.'

"I took a look, and there stood a pale Italian with a double-barrelled trumpet strapped across't his back. It did glitter sorta scary-like, that am a fact. They calls it a tom-bone and says that it makes music.

"'Now don't show yourself to be a fool,' says I. 'That feller am in a durned sight more danger of blowin out his own brains with that thing than you am. Sit still and keep your shirt on, will you!'

"But a big scare were on him all over, and I seed that nothin but a runnin spell would help the ole cowardly cuss. Well, I relied on these-here legs; I knowed I could ketch him if he did break.

"Says he, a-tremblin all over: 'Sutty, my Son, if

Alec Stephens kills me I wants you to go to Illinois and tell 'em that I died in the line of my duty like a man oughta. And mind, tell 'em I died game and that my last words were the Declaration of Independence says—' and here he took a squint at the Italian who had unstrapped his long, twisted brass horn and had it in his hand sorta shootin-fashion, that's a fact—an durn if ole Abe didn't go out of that car like a cat outen a cellar when a broom am follerin. The straw made a monstrous, swishin-sorta sound as he went thru the door, and I heerd the bottles a-clunkin as he run.

"I took after him, a-hollerin: 'Ketch him! Don't hurt him! I'se a-takin him to an asylum. He's crazy as a bedbug but am not dangerous.'

"Well, a heavy-set young feller, with his shirt collar open and his britches in his boots and a black seegar pointed up towards his eye, just squat onto his all-fours afore the ole durned-crazy cuss and he flung him two somersaults over him, and Windin Blades lit on his stern and bounced and the bottles rattled agin.

"As I come up, the feller what throwed him says to me: 'Be Gawd, that fat feller has et glass works for supper, hasn't he?'

"'As like as not,' says I. 'He's durned fool enough to do anything.'

"'I thought he had from the jinglin in his innards when he lit there,' says he. And then he took a look at me for a long spell. Says he: 'Mister, let me give you



some ad-vice. When you takes Fatty to the ass-lum, do you stay outside the gate.'

"Says I: 'I'll do it, for I knows you am a friend of mine.'

"Says he: 'Is there a tax onto legs where you come from?'

" 'Why?' says I.

" 'Cause,' says he, 'if there am, you am the poorest man in Maryland, that's all. How did the ole hay-stack go crazy?'

"Says I: 'He ate hisself outen his senses.'

" 'Be Jethero! I thought so,' says he. 'I know that he never went mad a-thinkin.'

"Says I: 'Mister, you are right.'

"And ole Abe set onto his hind end all this time, either scared or hurt too bad to move. I went up and whispered to him to git up and git into the car, and says I: 'It won't hurt to give 'em a little crazy speech offen the platform. It won't cost you much trouble to do that, and it will convince 'em you am addled. Just talk natural; that's all you have to do.'

"Well, he groaned, and got onto his all-fours. And I swear, just then he reminded me of an awful elephant called Hannibal, what I once't seed at a circus. Now just to think of this cross-barred gnat-beast bein ole Abe, President of the United States of North America, I swear—natural-born durned fool as I knows I is—I felt shamed and sorta humbled, and I sorta felt like cuttin of his throat and a-sellin the hay to pay for my shame and a-drinkin all the whiskey on his carcass to make myself feel good again . . .

but I shook him up, and got him to the cars, and there he made a sorta talk. 'Bout his whiskers and puttin his foot down on the Declaration of Independence and so on—

“*Swisk! Spat! Pop!* come about a peck of eggs, and they smelt pow’ful. I jerked him into the car and heerd a feller holler: ‘We were a-savin of ’em for ole Abe tomorrer, but durn if you ain’t entitled to a few for bein as big a fool as he is.’

“The cars started for Washin’ton, and I were glad. ‘Now,’ says I. ‘If you’ll keep your mouth shut, I’ll git you through, and it wouldn’t be bad if you keep it shut for the next four years.’

“He set still a while. And at last, says he: ‘Sutty, my Son, what become of Alec Stephens and his un-earthly cannon? Did it go off?’

“‘No,’ says I. ‘But you did. You moved yourself.’

“‘Says he: ‘Sutty, we oughta not to be held ’sponsible when we are under a big scare.’

“‘That’s a fact,’ says I. ‘And that oughta be narrated to the people, and get ’em to endorse it, for it’s all that’ll save you, Mister Linkhorn, durin your stay as President. Just take the position that you ain’t ’sponsible while under a scare, and it will cover your whole administration.’

“‘Sutty, my Son, you am great,’ says he.

“And we trundled on, nobody knowin the ole feller, and got into the room at Willard’s. But afore I had time to git the hay and bottles and cross-barred truck offen him, I heerd a noise in the passage like the rollin of a wheelbarrow mixed up with a heavy,

trampin sound—I thought it were a Irishman a-fetchin coals—when the door flew wide-open and in come a peacock’s feather six feet long, with all the fuzz stripped off except the eye at the point. Then come a hat shaped like onto a funnel and covered with gold; and then hair and whiskers enough to stuff a bed; and then more gold-leaf and shiny buttons; and then the for’ard end of a sword with ole Mars’ head on top the handle; then a pair of boots what mighta been fire-buckets footed. And then the hind end of that awful sword come, supported from the floor by a wheel as big as a washpan to keep the scabbard from wearin out. And when it all got into the room and were took together, it proved to be Lieutenant General Winfield Scott, commander in chief of all the earth. And the whole affair, when straightened up, reached onto the ceilin about fourteen feet, and that awful sword nearly crossed the room.

“I’se too dry to talk any more now, but will tell you agin what that awful mixture of gold, feathers, iron, noise, gas, and leather did, and how I were scared. Ain’t a general an awful thing to meet and contemplate, George, particularly when they am a-struttin and a-gobblin?”



PART EIGHT

**A SECOND VIEW  
OF THE  
FAMILY BOSOM**



## DAD'S DOG-SCHOOL

I had often laughed at an anecdote anent training a puppy to hold fast—and doubtless so have many of my readers—as told by the gifted W. T. Haskill. I began to tell it one summer night at our camp fire, when Sut interrupted me:

“Stop, George. You can’t do justice to that-there doleful business. It happened, or rather took place a-purpose, in our family. It couldn’t a-been did by any other people on this earth but us, for it am plumb-clarified damn fool from end to end. Dad planned it; and him, and Mam, and Sal, and Bent, and me—oh yas, and the pup—I’d like to forgit him—we did the work. And if we didn’t make a perfect,

finished, complete, durned momox outen the thing, there's no use in havin a genius for bein infernal natural-born fools at all.

"Dad—he's as tetchy about it to this day as a sore-back hoss is 'bout green flies. If you want to see him shed his shirt quick as a fox kin come outen a bag, and fall into gatherin rocks and then flingin 'em just damn promiscuously—a-saltin and a-pepperin the job with red-hot, ravenous, home-made cussin—you growl like onto a dog a-holdin a hanketcher or a rag, and you'll monstrous soon see a bald-headed man hot enough to fry spit. It's a pow'ful delicate experiment to try and git out without a scab above your ears. Be perfectly ready to run as soon as you growl; if you don't, it'll rain on you bad. Surest way is to growl after you has started and, if you's monstrous fast on foot, you may venture to holler 'Sick 'im, Sugar!' But be careful; I'se seed it tried.

"You see, when I were 'bout sixteen, Steve Crawley give me a bull pup: the color of rich cream, white under the belly and on the lower end of the legs, blue snout, red eyes, wrinkled forehead, and showed his teeth even when he was sleepin. Ugly as a she-hornet and brave as a trapped rat. Dad took pow'fully to him; cause their natures were sorta like, I reckon. He were the only critter I ever knowed Dad to be good to, and nary a person yet.

"Late one Saturday we set in and killed a tearin-big, black-and-white yearling bull beast. And on Sunday mornin, after gittin a bellyfull of fried liver and chopped onions, Dad sat down onto the cabin



steps in the sun, a-playin with Sugar—that were the pup's name. I were mounted onto the fence, a-shavin seed ticks offen my legs with a barlow knife; and Mam were in the yard, sittin onto the half-bushel with three or four of the childer's heads in her lap, busy right in the middle of a big still hunt after insects.

“At last says Dad: ‘Sut, s’pose you tote Sugar off wif you down to the crick to keep ’im from follerin of me and seein what I does. You come back when you hears me beller like onto a young bull, an’ I’ll larn yer dorg to hole on. I’s’e jis’ studied out the bes’ way in creation to make ’im hold to anything until bunty hens sprouts tails. This yere day’s work’ll be the makin of the pup.’

“‘How on the earth, Dad, will you do it?’ says I.

“Dad got up and ketched a big handful of britches ahind, atwixt the waistband and the fork—rather nigher the fork, though—and, after givin hissself a few good wholesome scratchin rubs, said: ‘Jis’ so. I’ll make yer sis Sal thar sew me up in Suggins’s hide’—that were the yearling’s name, mind you—‘and I’ll play ho’ned cattle rite squar into Sugar’s han’ while you sicks ’im on; an’, ef you does the sickin part like you orter, hit’ll be the makin of that ar pup. When he gits a savin holt onto the hide, you seize his tail an’ *sorter* pull ’im back. But don’t you break the holt; ef you does, you spiles a dorg and, when I comes outen the hide, damn ef I don’t spile you.’

“Mam cracked a insect vig’rously atwixt her thumbs, and then wiped her nails onto her gown along

her thighs, and says she: 'Good law sakes! Now fur more unanimated foolishness. Hu ever hearn of the likes bein done by the daddy of a famerly, an' him a bal'-headed man et that, a-sheddin his har fur the grave. Lovingood, yu'll keep on wif yer devilment an' nonsense ontu yu fetch the Day of Judgement ontu our bar heads sum night—*kerthrash*—afore hit's time . . . or sum uther ailment—cholery, measils, pollygammy, or sum sich-like, jis' see ef yu don't, an' then yu'll *run* an' leave me tu fight hit out by mysef, yu know yu will. Now jis' quit, an' let that ar blasted roun-headed pup edecate hissef like yer uther childer dus.'

" 'Shet up that ar snaggy feedin-hole of yurn, yu durned ole she-hempbrake. You'd oppose my gwine to heaven, I raley du b'lieve,' says Dad.

" 'No, I won't,' says Mam, shakin her head. 'Yu'll never try tu du that.' And she piannered her fingers down thru the hair along the side of the one of the childer's heads, close't after a knowin ole insect what had been raced before. He were aimin for the wrinkle under the ear-flap, but he never got there; he got hisself busted like onto a 'cussion cap, 'bout a inch and a half from his den.

" 'Now,' says Dad, a-turnin to me, still a-rubbin slow with the handful of britches. 'Yu see, Sut, he'll git good holts ontu the hide, smell the blood, an' larn the nater ove the varmint he's a-contendin wif. I'll beller an' make b'lieve I'se a-tryin tu git loose't, but not act cow fur enough tu tar loose't ur dishearten 'im. Better nur gwine tu school tu a Yankee cuttin-

box woman a durned sight; an' in a month, jis' let ole widder Bradley's cow jump intu the cabbiges agin, ef she's fond of freezin snouts wif a dorg. He'll stay wif her ontill apas' milkin time next day, an' not quit then. Oh! I tell yu hit'll be the makin ove the pup.'

"So Dad took Sal off to the loom-house where the hide were a-hangin. I had salted it good, to keep from spoilin till Dad could turn it into whiskey, and I whistled off Sugar. After I had gone a few steps, I hollered: 'Oh, Dad!'

" 'What?'

" 'S'pose Sugar gits that savin hold you were speakin of onto *you*; what am I to do then?'

" 'Du hell!' says Dad. 'Du nuthin but sick 'im on. Hu ever hearn ove a man's bein dorg-bit thru a cow-hide?'

"Says I: 'He's pow'ful far-reachin for a pup; better mind, Dad.'

"I seed him begin to hunt for a rock, and I struck a purt shanghai trot for the crick. Me and the young dog lay down among the mint, and listened to the gurglin of the water.

"Well, thinks I: 'My duty's a plain one, anyhow. Just sick 'im on and do nothin else. And I means to do it; for it am to be the makin of you, my sweet Sugar, I really do expect.'

"Directly I heerd Dad a-bellerin just the best sample of a yearling's noise you ever heerd, exceptin it were a scrimption too coarse and a little too fast—Dad were excited—'Boor, woo woof—bohua a huah.'

'First-rate, by the jinglin Jehosaphat,' thinks I, and Sugar cocked his ears and barked.

"Dad had fooled the dog. The only livin thing I ever knowed him to fool, exceptin a new doggery keeper now and then, and Mam—she said he fooled her pow'ful once't: that were when she swore herself to be the mammy of his brats.

"Well, there he were in the yard onto his all-fours, sewed up body and soul in the rawhide—hairy side out—and he'd took off every durned stitch of his clothes. I thought pow'fully how my saltin the hide were goin to work after the show begun to be excitin and Dad begun to sweat. Sall had sewed his hands plumb up into the hide of the forelegs, and the loose hooves were floppin and crackin about below 'em as he walked or pawed up dust.

"She had turned the head and horns back—raw side out—as high as Dad's eyebrows, and tied the nose to the neck so he could see the enemy. His face were smeared with the blood and fat; the tail trailed after him sorta dead-like; his stern were way up yonder, his hindlegs bein longer nor his fore ones; and, takin the sight altogether, it couldn't be beat for a big rough scary thing outen hell or a madhouse.

"I seed Mam a-pullin up a bean-pole in the garden and, after tearin off the vines, she set it up in the chimney corner without Dad's noticin it.

"I whispered: 'What's you goin to do with that-there pole? Goin a-fishin, say, Mam?'

"Says she: 'I'se gwine tu play "she hempbrake" wif it ontu that ar rawhide arter a while.' Then she

went and stood in the door with her hands onto her hips, and the childer mounted the fence.

“ ‘Well, Dad,’ says I. ‘Is you good ready? Shall I sick ’im on?’

“Dad were feared Sugar’d find out the trick and wouldn’t speak, but just nodded his head; and durn if he even didn’t do it like onto a bull.

“I straddled Sugar, patted him onto the ribs, and says I, ‘Sick ’im, boy,’ and the dog went square in. Dad sorta horned at him and blowed. Sugar flew round, and my Dad flew round; the tail trailed limber and lazy, and tangled sometimes among Dad’s hind legs. Sugar a-huntin for the right spot to bite . . . Dad pretendin like he didn’t want him to find it. The pup made a grand rush and got a hold nigh onto the root of the tail, and set hisself back. My Dad kicked with both hind-legs as quick and vig’rous as a mule and, ’stead of bellerin as he oughta, he shouted out right plain: ‘Oh, hell fire!’ He had kicked the pup plumb into the house atwixt Mam’s legs.

“Says I: ‘Dad, *that* won’t do. That weren’t *cow*-kickin at all; them’s real stud-hoss licks. You’ll never be the makin of the pup if you pounds him that-there way.’

“ ‘Make hell!’ says Dad. ‘This hide hain’t es thick ’bout the tail es hit orter be fur a yearlin’s,’ and he tried to rub hisself back there with his foreleg; but the loose hooves flopped about so and his hands bein sewed up, he didn’t do it to suit hisself much, so he backed agin the fence and rubbed his rump agin the

end of a rail hog-fashion—up and down with a jerk, you know.

“‘Is Sugar’s teef sharp, ole man?’ says Mam, sorta careless-like.

“‘How do I know,’ growled Dad. ‘Hit’s none ove yure bizness nohow, yu durned ole par ove warpin-bars. What du yu know ’bout the makin ove pups?’

“Mam sorta glanced at the bean-pole, but said nothin. Sugar were sittin onto his tail, his head and his forelegs stuck out from under Mam’s frock-hem where Dad had sent him, lookin sorta like he hadn’t made up his mind exactly what were best to do.

“I ketched him by the nape of the neck and drug him out, and sicked him on agin. Durn my shirt if he hadn’t been studyin to some purpose while he were under Mam’s coat-tails, for he made his rush at *t’other* end this time.

“Says I: ‘Don’t dodge, Dad. The hide’s thicker ’bout the horns then it am ’bout the tail.’

“I’d scarcely spoke when I heerd Sugar’s jaws snap. The yearlin’s tail weren’t draggin lazy now. It were stiff straight out, way high up, and sweepin the air clear of insects all round the yard. Just then I wouldn’t a-took ten dollars for my dog.

“‘*Barw aw!*’ says Dad.

“‘Yearlin for the earth exactly. You mocks their voice better nor you does their kickin,’ says I.

“I were disappointed, for I were listenin for some durned plain English from Dad, for Sugar had got hisself a steel-trap hold onto the point of Dad’s snout and his upper lip. Nose to nose they were, and no

yearlin skin atwixt—not a durned inch as I could see. Dad's ole warty snout were pulled out to a point like onto a mad bear's, and as taper and red and sharp as a beet. The lip were stretched as far under it like onto a shovel-plow, or a storekeeper's tin coffee-scoop, a-ketchin red gravy from the snout. Great golly! How sweet it musta hurt. It makes *my* snout itch now.

“‘Ka-ka-a!’ said Sugar, leanin way back and wallin his eye up at me. Dad leaned way for'ard. And they swapped sides of the yard faster nor folks turns in a dance, and the tail a-keepin every durned fly and gnat outen the yard for six foot high. Just then I wouldn't a-took twenty dollars for my dog.

“The childer all yelled and said ‘Sick 'im!’ They thought it were all goin just as Dad wanted, the durned little fools. Sugar wagged his tail and round they'd fly agin.

“I heerd a new sound in the thicket, and it bein Sunday I were sorta expectin a retribution of some nature. I looked that way, and there I seed the bald end of Squire Haney's ole Sunday hoss a-pushin its way thru the chinquapin bushes . . . the Squire hisself up on deck, a-steerin with one hand and a-fendin off the limbs and burrs with t'other. Thinks I: ‘There, by golly! Here's a regular two hundred and twenty-five pound retribution after us and our family devotion sure enough . . . armed with a hymn book and loaded to the muzzle with brimstone, boilin pitch, forked flames, and such other niceties as makes up the Devil's breakfast . . . and some of it am goin

to be ladled out to us right now if the Squire's face am to be trusted as a sign.' It looked just like he'd swallowed a terbacker-worm dipped in aqua fortis and couldn't vomit. Even his pious ole hoss showed a grieved spirit from foretop to lip.

"A appetite to run began to gnaw my stomach, and I felt my face a-swellin with shame. I were shamed of Dad, shamed of Mam's bare legs and open collar, shamed of myself, and damn—if I minds right—if I weren't a morsel shamed of the pup. But, when I seed the square, blazin look Mam met him with, I made up my mind if she could stand the storm I could, and so I didn't run that time—nary a durned step.

"Squire Haney were one of the wonderfulest men in all my knowin. He wore a hat ten years, and wore a nail in the church wall bright—a-hangin it on. He wore a holler spot in the side of his walkin-stick with his fingers allers tetchin the same place; and he wore another greasy holler in one of the groanin benches—nigh onto the north corner of the pulpit—just like the sittin hole in a shoemaker's stool, only it weren't lined with leather. His pea sticks were shod with spikes; his firewood were clear of knots as wagon timber; his hens never laid on a Sunday, and set when he told 'em to. He give the whole of Sunday to the Lord . . . and shaved notes two days under the skin of weekly days, and allers made the feller what got shaved wait and git prayed for; and he throwed into the bargain a tract or two about the vanity of layin up store goods on earth, for the moths et the broadcloths and the thieves stole t'other things. He



toted the money-purse of the church, and histed the tunes and the backsliders. He were second engineer of a machine made outen a mess of sturgeon-backed, sandy-heeled ole maids; devarsed wives; or women what oughta been one or t'other; and other thin-minded persons; for the purpose, as they said, of squelchin sin in the neighborhood among such domestic heathens as us, but really for the mindin generally of everybody else's business.

"I forgot to mention his nose; it were his markin feature; no other mortal ever had heart to tote just such another nose. The skin offen it would a-covered a saddle, and were just the right color for the job; and the holes looked like the bow ports of a gun boat. He waded in once't to stop a big fight at muster, in a Christian way, and a feller broke a dogwood handspike or a chestnut fence rail—I'se forgot which—across't that nose, and twenty-seven bats and three kingfishers flew outen it. The lick only made the Squire blow it tolerable strong, scatterin round a peck of cobwebs and mud daubers' nests, and he went on a-stoppin the fight. He were on his way to church this mornin and, hearin awful sounds, he struck thru the bushes to 'zamine into it, bein his duty as greaser of the squelchin society.

"His hoss were of a pious turn of mind, or ole Haney wouldn't a-keep him a day. Nobody ever seed him kick, gallop, jump a fence, smell ɔther hosses, or chaw a bridle. He were never heerd squeal, belch, or make any unsightly sound and, beside all them marks, he had scabs onto his knees and mud on his

snout. Mind you, I speaks of the character of the hoss afore and up to after breakfast that Sunday mornin—nothin more—for I showed him that day to be as durned a ole hypocrite as ever toted a saddle or a hymn book. His wicked career ended in a tan vat, and the buzzards cleaned his bones. That awful Sunday shook even the Squire's belief on some points of hereafter. He now thinks they oughta take folks in hell like they does into church, six months on trial, and that the virtue of the thing be tried immediately on me and Mam. He b'lieves we'd both make eternity members easy.

“He rid up to the fence carefully, dropped the reins, held up his hands, and says he: ‘Furgivin Father above! What’s am yu tormentin them ar two varmint fur on the Lord’s Holy Sabbath? Say, O ye onregenerits, whar the patriarch of this depraved famerly?’

“ ‘Look a-yere, Squire Haney,’ says Mam. ‘I’s hits patriarch jis’ now; mos’ of the time I’s hits tail, I knows, but one thing sure: you’d bes’ trot along tu yer meetin. This am a *privit soshul famerly ‘musement* an’ hit needs no wallin up of eyes, nur groanin, nur secon-han low-quartered pray’rs tu make hit purfeck. ‘Sides, we’s got no notes to shave, nur gals ole enough tu convart; so yu better jis’ go way wif yer four-laiged, bald-faced pulpit, and preach tu sich es yersef, sunwhar else. Go ‘long, Squire, that’s a good feller.’

“I’d pulled a big jimson burr and held it up so Mam could see it, meanwhile a-motionin to’ards ole

Ball-eye's tail. Mam nodded her head. So, while the Squire were a-searchin a packet of tracts for one against devilment of Sundays, I sneaked up ahind him.

“Says Mam, as soft and sweet as if I were a sick baby: ‘Sutty, my darlint. Jis’ start the Squire’s hoss thar fur ’im. I’s feared he’ll be late fur meetin, speshully ef he stops at *Missis Givinses*.’ Here he give Mam a look from under his hat brim what spoke ‘Damn your ole soul’ just as plain as if the cussinest man in the country had hollered it. ‘Start him easy, my son, so as not jostle the ole man’s breakfus—hit mout sour on his stomick. Poor ole critter, he’s colicky an’ ailin anyhow, ef his looks don’t lie.’ I say: ‘ailin.’ He only pulled down four greasy fifty-sixes and, if you’d a-twisted his sweaty neck-hanketcher into rope, it would burn like a torch.

“I planted the burr high under ole Ball-eye’s tail, and he clamped it closed instantly. ’Bout the time he’d squeezed it to the hurtin point, I’d done busted a four-foot, white-oak clapboard plumb open atwixt the root of his tail and the Squire’s. The shock brought his tail water-tight atwixt his legs, and every sticker on the burr were buried to the butt in hoss-meat or hoss-tail.

“He kicked one perpendicular kick as high as the cabin chimney. I seed the whole length of his belly even to the surcingle buckle from behind, and sure enough I heerd the Squire’s coffee sloshin his chawed chicken and hard-boiled eggs ’bout pow’ful.

“ ‘Whoa, you, sir!’ says he.

“‘That-there last observation am no use, Mister Haney,’ says I. Another kick straight up at the sun.

“‘Whoa, you awful ole fool!’

“Says I: ‘He *can’t* woe, Squire. He’s a-gittin happy, and that’s hoss way of shoutin.’

“Atwixt the kicks, ole Ball-eye’d rise all fours from the earth ‘bout a foot—bouncin way—and light in the same tracks, a-sweatin round the eyes, with a snort for every bounce and a grunt with every kick. Then he made a gudgeon of his forelegs and kicked a plumb circle with his hind ones. If the air could be printed on, you’d a-seed a ring of hoss-shoe marks: twenty foot across’t, eleven high, and just ‘bout a hand and a half apart . . . heels all pointin to the center.

“The Squire got a good pullin hold with one hand onto the crupper, and a pushin one with t’other in the mane, while he set his stirrups way for’ard apast Ball-eye’s bits. It kept me pow’ful busy to watch the dog-makin and ole Haney’s happy hoss: both on ‘em were makin things happen so durnation fast.

“‘Trus’ freely in heaven, Squire, es long es crupper holt lasts. I think hit’ll hold a hour ur so yet, fur I see the pint of his tail laid close’t tu his belly a-tetching the girth,’ says Mam.

“‘Then pick a spot bare of rocks for your profile to strike,’ says I. That were a pow’ful comfortin remark of mine, and were sound doctrine too, weren’t it?

“‘Whoa! Whoa, sir!’—a kick—‘You blasted fool!’—a kick—‘Whoa! I say, you infernal . . .’—a kick.

"Thinks I: 'There, that-there kick were a interposition, for it kept the Squire from plain cussin.'

" 'Sum of you'—a kick—'ketch his bits!'—a kick.

" 'Better pray fur a anvil tu cleave ontu his tail, a sockdolagin big anvil,' says Mam. 'Hit'll cum if *yu* ax hit, yea verily.'

"Just then Ball-eye, findin his enemy to be kick-proof, his faith give out. He took a scare and set into gittin away, in a style no hoss ever used afore. The gait he picked out for the 'casion weren't just the thing for leavin wrath or tribulation with, I don't think. There weren't enough straight-ahead leavin in it; it were a 'sortment made up of dromedary gallop, snake slidin, side windin, and ole Virginny jig, tetched off with a sprinkle of quadrille, stepped off infernally fast for a pious-minded hoss on a Sunday. 'Bout every thirty yards he'd mix in a kick, aimed at the back of the Squire's head.

"As soon as he fairly started, Mam hollered: 'Squire, when yu calls for the anvil, moutent hit be es well tu ax fur a lockchain an' a interspersion, too. Yu don't know what mout happen; them's orful strange moshuns he's a-makin fur a pious hoss.'

"Ole Haney had grabbed his bridle for stoppin or steerin purposes. Hit hat were jammed fast on the back of his short fat neck and cocked sharp up ahind ears red as a cock's comb and set square out under the rim. His elbows and toes were wide-apart like his hoss were red-hot, and durned if I don't b'lieve he were. The last words I heerd the Squire

mention as he went outen sight were 'Now I lay me down to sleep.'

"Thinks I: 'That's a close't shot for a offhand prayer with wet powder, but it am *aimed at the wrong board.*' A man musta had a pow'ful sound conscience to a-slept on as wide-awake a hoss as ole Haney had twixt his fat legs—a clear fall from grace that hoss were.

"The engineer of the sin-squelchin machine were found that afternoon in the laurel among the rocks on the crick, and every way for thirty foot the ground were papered with tracts and notes of hand. He were hauled home onto a ox slide; Ball-eye were sold at public outcry next day at court for back-slidin and fallin from grace, and fetched one dollar and eighty-cents on account of his hide and shoes. The burr were sold and delivered with him, still sunk under his tail.

"The first words I noticed comin from Dad, after Squire Haney left us in that-there most un-natural and unmannerly way, were: 'Oke e 'urned 'up 'oose.'

"His talk were changin from yearlin to human, and had got 'bout half-way. He meant it for 'Choke the durned pup loose,' but I just minded my orders—'Sick 'im on an' du nuffen else'—and I did it like a man.

"Dad's tail flew from the door to the gate; then Sugar's tail flew from the door to the gate; then from the gate round back again—a constant swappin of places, and nobody pleased—right purt of dust,

too. Just then I wouldn't a-took thirty dollars for my dog.

“‘Oke ’e ’up, ’od ’am yure ’ouls.’

“‘Oh, durnation,’ thinks I. ‘I were mistaken ’bout a-changin of tongues; that’s good plain English—with the trimmins—wantin nothin but the use of the upper lip.’ I minded my first orders: ‘Sick ’im, Sugar.’

“The snout of the hide what were tied back on the neck worked sorta loose, and the fold hung down on Dad’s and Sugar’s snouts, and my unregenerate Dad were blindfolded. The horns hung dolefully loose at each side of his head, like *they* were tired of the dog.

“Mam kept watchin their motions pow’ful close’t. Says she: ‘Sut, that ar dorg’s holt won’t break, will hit?’

“‘Not,’ says I, ‘unless Dad’s nose’s rotten.’

“‘Thar is *sum* onsartinty ’bout hits bein soun, he’s soaked hit so much in sperrits,’ said Mam, and she studied a minute with her finger onto her lip. ‘I’ll risk hits tearin, anyhow,’ said she. ‘I never will fergive myself ef I lets this chance slip.’

“She got the bean pole; spit in her hands; cleared the chips from under her with her feet; and, as the two varmints flew round agin, she riz on her tip-toes and fetched down the pole with both hands from *way up* yonder . . . and laid ’bout four-foot of the end as straight as a line from the root of the hide’s tail to the horns. It sounded like bustin open a dry poplar log; raised a stripe of dust to the top

of the hair—four inches wide—and it smoked all along there like it were afire. I just thought ‘Gee-whillikins!’ ’bout twice’t.

“Dad squalled low under it like a sore-back hoss when you’s a-mountin; and, as he flew round agin, says he: ‘’Ell ’ire an’ ’arnation, ’at’s ’at?’

“Says I: ‘Nothin. But you’ve knocked down the martin’s gourd-pole, and spilled the young uns.’

“He tried to rise to the human way of standin, but the tassle a-hangin to his smeller were too heavy, and the hold were as tender as a sore eye. Just then I wouldn’t a-took forty dollars for my dog. Says he: ‘’Am ’e ’artin ’ord’ ’ole, an’ ’e ’unyuns ’oo.’

“Then he tried some first-rate overhanded knockin, first with one foreleg and then t’other. He made the loose hoofs rattle over Sugar’s rump, but Sugar just said ‘Ka! A!’ and surged back to his snout-pullin . . . and round and round they fly agin. What the devil they expected to gain by that, I can’t for the life of me tell; but they seemed to be ’greed ’bout it anyhow; for, everytime Sugar started, damn if Dad didn’t start too—so quick you couldn’t say which made the first motion. The salt mixed with sweat were one of Dad’s reasons for not staying still much, I sorta think, and a tender nose made him foller Sugar’s lead quick. Now, weren’t it a hell of a fix for a ill-natured cuss like Dad—who allers *would* have his own way—to be in? Every time that my Dad’s tail come to’ards Mam, down come the bean-pole sure as sunrise—‘*Cherow*’—soundin and lookin



like beatin carpets, and feelin like splittin a body's back-bone with a dull axe.

"Dad, blindfolded as he were, soon learnt the place in his circuit where the licks fell; and, by the jumpin Jinny, he'd commence squattin afore he got there.

"I dunno how it were exactly, but the wind somehow gathered atwixt the hairy side of Dad's hide and the raw side of the yearlin's . . . and every lick Mam issued to him with that-there never-tire bean-pole, it would bust out at the sewin pow'ful sudden, soundin loud and doleful. Mam smiled every time she heerd it.

"'That ar yearlin mus' a-hed the colic afore hit were killed,' said sis Callimy Jane. She's allers sayin some durned fool thing havin no bearin on the case.

"'Oh, hush, yu little narrer-tailed tucky hen,' said brother Benton. 'Hits the onexpectedness of the cumin of that ar bean-pole.'

"'Or the tetchin sensation after it does come,' said I myself.

"Mam also took time to spare Bent a first-rate tetch with her pole, cradlin-fashion. He went flyin outen his tracks over the fence, with his hands flat onto his stern. As he lit in the weeds, says he: 'I were right, by golly. *Hit am the pole* what dus hit.'

"Callimy Jane, who were a-looking at Bent while he were up in the air like she were a-listenin, chirped out: 'An' so were I.' I thought myself I heerd Bent's

gallus buttons bust off. Just as he started up he shut his mouth, just in time to ketch his heart.

“ ‘Cherow!’ come that eternal wallopin pole down agin along Dad. He fairly bawled: ‘ ’Ont ’et up ’at ’artin ’ole any ’ore, yu ’amn ’ules.’

“Says I: ‘I ain’t set the martin-pole up one time. It’s *Mam* what keeps a-settin it up, and it won’t stay up.’

“ ‘Quit, yu ’amn ’itch, an’ let ’e ’ole lie,’ says Dad.

“ ‘*Thar hit lies,*’ answered Mam, as she fetched it down along his back—another real-softenin swallow. The dust had quite risen now outen that-there skin.

“Says I: ‘Stand it, Dad. Stand it like a man. It may be a little hurtin to you, but damn if it ain’t the makin of the pup. Stay with that, Sugar, my boy; you’s mighty nigh a diploma’d dog.’

“Dad begun to totter on his hind-legs. His stern weren’t way up yonder like it were when he first opened the dog school—it were down ’bout level with his shoulders—and he were a-comin to his knees pow’ful fast behind. I seed his tail a-tremblin, a monstrous bad sign in horned cattle. Dad asked if it weren’t twelve o’clock? Just then I wouldn’t a-took fifty dollars for my dog. I felt like he were nigh about made.

“When Sal had got done sewin up Dad, he started her to the stillhouse after a jug of Spanish Fly whiskey to make happy come after he let out his dog school—and she just now got back, took a look at the case as it stood, and got mad. Says she: ‘Yu

durned yaller son of a bitch. *I'll* break yer holt.' She flung down the jug and snatched the axe.

"Says I: 'Mind, Sal, whatever you do, don't you cut the dog. He's 'bout made. Be careful how you place your licks.'

" 'Aim fur the *ho'ns*, my darter,' said Mam.

"Here she come, with a vig'rous, overhanded splitter—edge foremost—aimed to fall atwixt Sugar's ears. But he jerked back a little as the lick come, and it went through the double of the hide, scalpin a piece of skin offen Dad's forehead 'bout as big as a dollar, kept on and sliced off Sugar's two smellin holes a half-inch thick. Then it took a chunk offen Dad's snout, 'bout the size and color of a black-heart cherry. Then it went lower and carried along a new moon offen Dad's upper lip and a little of Sugar's lower lip and Dad's forefinger point . . . kept on down . . . took one of Sugar's fore paws clean, a yearlin's hoof, and then passed on into the earth up to the helve, and there it stopped.

"Says Sal: '*Thar, durn yu!*'

"Sugar keeled one way and Dad t'other. One fainted stiff; and t'other, ruined forever as a dog. I'd a-took a ragged counterfeit dollar on a wildcat bank for him now. That were the liveliest Sunday I ever seed at home. I cried right purt, though, as I flung a big rock with a strip of bark tied round it into the hornet hole in the crick that night."

"What made you cry, Sut? Was it your father's condition?"

"Father's con-durnation! I forgot to mention that

Sugar were fast to t'other end of that-there strip of bark. Who wanted a three-footed dog with no smellin holes? I didn't. He were the most perfectly-spoiled pup in the makin I ever heerd tell of. Mighta looked for a general durned momoxin of things, though, when Dad took the job with Squire Haney to help.

"Boys, I'se sleepy now. Here's wishin"—Sut raised on his elbow and held up his flask to the light—"you all good dreams. And you, George, may you dream of ownin three never-failin springs, so close't together you kin lay on your belly and reach 'em all: the biggest one runnin ole whiskey; the middle one, strained honey; and the least and last, cold water. With nary a natural-born durned fool in two miles to bother you; and, when you wake up, may you find it to be a mortal fact.

"As to me, if I kin just miss dreamin of hell or ole Bullen is all I ask. Some one of you move that-there saddle, down yonder by the corner of the camp, further outen the way of my legs. Now let's snore some. Blow out the light."







